That elusive sleep- Every Mumma’s dream

What things directly affect your sleep?

Several factors can directly impact sleep:

1. Stress and Anxiety: High levels of stress or anxiety can make it difficult to fall asleep or stay asleep.

If you are stressed or your home is stressed, then you can expect this to effect baby’s mental state and sleep as well. If this is an ongoing problem, it is important to seek some help. Look for strategies to work on this and bring in your support people.

Babies are born with an immature nervous system. Babies borrow your calm to regulate their emotions so need you to be calm for this to happen. This is especially so when they are falling asleep. As babies are adjusting to being outside the womb your voice smell arms and movement help them stay calm.

2. Caffeine and Stimulants: Consuming caffeine or stimulants close to bedtime can interfere with sleep.

The amount of caffeine you consume can also affect your baby’s sleep if you are breastfeeding.

3. Alcohol: While it might initially make you feel drowsy, alcohol can disrupt sleep patterns and lead to poor-quality sleep.

If you are breastfeeding some alcohol will go through breastmilk. Think -blood alcohol level is the same as breastmilk level of alcohol.

4. Electronic Devices: The blue light emitted by smartphones, tablets, and computers can interfere with the body's production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates sleep.

If you are on your phone or watching TV and your baby is in the same area watching, their sleep can also be affected. Try to have devices turned off for an hour before sleep time.

5. Environmental Factors: Noise, light, temperature, and uncomfortable bedding can all affect sleep quality. Baby’s are very sensitive to environmental factors. A warm bath and reading a book can help babies to go to sleep. Young babies may need to be held to sleep (contact napping) at different times. It’s a big adjustment living outside the womb!

6. Diet: Eating heavy or spicy meals too close to bedtime can cause discomfort and disrupt sleep.

These can sometimes affect your baby’s sleep if you are breastfeeding.

7. Medications: Certain medications can interfere with sleep, so it's important to be aware of any potential side effects. Herbal medications also can have an impact for good or bad.

‘Mothersafe’ is a good contact to ring if you are unsure how your medications affect your breastfed baby.

8. Sleep Disorders: Conditions like sleep apnea, insomnia, restless leg syndrome, and narcolepsy can significantly impact sleep. It’s a good idea to get these checked out if you think you might be experiencing any of these.

9. Physical Activity: Regular exercise can improve sleep, but exercising too close to bedtime may have the opposite effect.

Too much activity before bedtime can stimulate a baby.

10. Circadian Rhythm: Your body's internal clock, influenced by factors like light exposure and daily routines, plays a crucial role in regulating sleep-wake cycles.

Baby’s circadian rhythm can take up to 3 months to develop and may wake more at night till then. Going for walks in the daytime to expose baby to light can help this development.

11. Napping: While short naps can be refreshing, long or irregular naps can disrupt night-time sleep. Mums often need to nap to get through this hard time of night waking.

Baby’s waking to feed is biologically normal and needed for nutritional reasons. Babies need regular naps through the day. Baby’s sleep better with more sleep. Try looking for early tired signs like staring and looking away to start the sleep process rather than waiting till baby is overtired.

12. Shift Work: Irregular work hours can lead to circadian rhythm disturbances and sleep problems. Mothers are like shift workers in that their work is day and night.

They may find themselves having difficulty sleeping

It's important to identify and address any factors that may be negatively affecting your sleep to promote better sleep quality and overall well-being. If sleep problems persist, consider consulting a healthcare professional or sleep specialist for guidance.

Remember babies are not manipulating you they are just unable to help themselves and need you to meet their needs. It’s tough for them too.

For more information about sleep look at Websites like

<https://karitane.com.au/stores/_sharedfiles/Brochures/Sleep-and-Bedtime.pdf>

<https://www.tresillian.org.au/advice-tips/settling/sleep-cycles/>

[**https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/resources/understanding-baby-sleep**](https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/resources/understanding-baby-sleep)

**How do I know my baby is tired?**

For the first six weeks to eight weeks, your baby probably won’t be able to stay up for more than two hours at a time. If you wait much longer than that to put your baby down, they’ll be overtired and won’t nod off easily.

During your baby’s first three months, watch for early tired signs that your baby is sleepy, such as:

* rubbing their eyes
* flicking their ear with their hand
* faint, dark circles under the eyes
* whining and crying
* staring blankly into space
* yawning and stretching a lot
* flushed eyebrows
* losing interest in people and toys
* becoming quiet and still
* They may also turn their face away from face to face connection
* They may bury their face in your chest

If you spot these or any other signs of sleepiness, try putting your baby down in the cot or bassinet. Don’t worry, you’ll soon come to recognise your baby’s daily rhythms and patterns, and spot the cues that mean your baby is ready for a [nap](https://www.babycentre.co.uk/a1051915/naps-the-basics). Your baby won’t be able to recognise the difference between night time and daytime for a few months yet. But you can begin to introduce the idea of night and day right from the start. This might help them catch on more easily when they are ready.

In the daytime, when your baby is alert:

* Change your baby’s clothes when they wake, to help them understand that it’s the start of a new day.
* Play, talk and interact with your baby as much as you can.
* Make daytime feeds social. Chat and sing as you feed your baby.
* Keep the house and their room light and bright.
* Let your baby hear every day noises, such as the radio or the washing machine.

At night time:

* Change your baby into their pyjamas to mark the beginning of their night time routine and show them that it’s the end of the day.
* Read to your baby before bed.
* Only talk to your baby in a low, calm voice when you feed them.
* Don’t be too chatty or play with them, as this will stimulate them.
* They will still need to feed at night for some time as they have small stomachs and will need changes to nappies for a little while. Ensure you offer a breastfeed when they wake and change nappy if they have done a poo.
* Keep lights and noises low.