



## **DOES YOUR BABY HAVE TROUBLE SLEEPING?**



This is a common problem that parents find starting around 4-6 months of age. To figure out what is causing this, it is important to first understand that when babies sleep they go through 4-5 sleep cycles just like the rest of us. After coming out of each cycle they will be in a light sleep and it is normal for babies to experience partial awakenings at this point. Most babies are able to lull themselves back to sleep when this happens. The babies that have trouble with this self-comforting are the babies that “can’t sleep through the night”. But why is he/she having trouble falling back asleep? Here are some helpful hints to think about when trying to help your baby overcome this issue:

### **--How much does your baby sleep during the day?**

As a general guideline, infants between 4 and 15 months tend to nap for one to two hours in the morning and again in the afternoon and go to sleep for the night around 7PM. Some babies also take a third, shorter, late-afternoon nap, which most drop by 9 months. If they don’t sleep enough during the day, or if you put them down too late in the evening, they may be overtired and wake up cranky during the night. Vice-versa, if they sleep too much during the day, they may not sleep well either. Try to keep the nap and bedtime schedule as consistent as possible.

### **--Is your baby sleeping in the same room as you?**

If so, this may cause your infant to fuss to get your attention when they wake up. Now that they have more muscular strength and coordination, they can lift themselves up to look around when they wake up and, once they see you, they may want some interaction. However, if you move the crib out of your room, or if you place a sheet covering the railing so that they can’t see you, they may be uninterested in their surroundings and put themselves back to sleep.

### **--Is your baby waking up to feed, or just for comforting?**

It is normal for small infants to feed once, sometimes twice, during the night. By the time they are 6 months old, 90% of babies should be able to go through the night without feeding. However, if they are still feeding every 2 hours during the day, they will not be able to last the whole night without a feeding. Gradually space out their daytime feedings to every 4 hours before withdrawing nighttime feedings. If you feel they are just taking a few sips and seeking the comfort more than the food, refer to the section below.

### **--Is there a certain routine your baby associates with falling asleep?**

If your custom at naps and bedtime is to rock or feed your child until asleep, your infant will not learn how to go back to sleep without your help. The best way to remedy this is to place your baby in the crib drowsy, but awake. His last waking memory should be of the crib, not of the breast, bottle or rocking--so when your baby starts to act drowsy, stop what you are doing and place him in the crib. After he has learned to quiet himself for naps and bedtime, you can place the same demands on him for his nighttime awakenings. If the crying persists, you may check and recheck your baby every 15 minutes, but make the visits brief (less than one minute) and boring, without talking or turning on the lights. If your child is fearful due to separation anxiety, stay with him as long as it takes to calm him, but don’t lift him out of the crib. It will take time, but your persistence will pay off and soon your baby will learn self-soothing and will sleep much better through the night.