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sleep savers

How to get rest when your newborn is up around the clock **By Jennifer Graham Kizer**

When Jenny Schmidt describes the first months after she gave birth last year, she doesn't mince words. "I felt like I was jet-lagged for eight weeks," says the Atlanta native. "That's the only way I can explain this sensation of major sleep deprivation!"

Not every new mom experiences time-zone-blurring fatigue. But it's understandable if the term "walking zombie" does describe you at some point in these early days. As your body recovers from the strains of pregnancy and childbirth, you're nurturing an infant who wakes up several times a night feeling hungry (or wet or colicky or disoriented), and who needs you to be (sigh) awake too.

It's helpful to remember that this is temporary. Once your baby starts sleeping through the night, you can return to your regular sleep schedule. But on average, most infants won't be able to do that for least seven to eight weeks, and very often longer. Even if your kid's a fast learner, you're still logging vampire hours for 50 consecutive nights, minimum.

The happy news: there's almost always an opportunity to sneak in sleep somewhere. So wake up, weary newbie parent, and learn some sleep-saving moves. Seriously, eyes open now...

Delegate a nighttime feeding. Let a loved one take the 2 a.m. shift for you. If you enjoy thinking of yourself as the exclusive source for all of baby's nourishment, get over it. "One component to postpartum depression is sleep deprivation," says Marjorie Greenfield, MD, ob-gyn at the University Hospital of Cleveland and Case Medical Center. "So if you've really bottomed out, you *need* one full night's sleep—even if that means giving the baby a bottle of formula."

Delegating feedings is how Julianna Caplan, of Washington, D.C., stayed sane after the birth of her twins, Norah and Josephine. Every week or two, she handed off a 3 a.m. shift to an overnight guest—her mother, a dear friend, or a regular babysitter (at \$10 an hour). "Getting six hours of uninterrupted sleep made me feel like the Energizer Bunny," Caplan says.

Breastfeeding moms need relief too. Before going to bed, Alison McGrath, of Denver, would give her husband a bottle of milk she'd expressed with a breast pump. He'd take the dead-of-night feeding, which allowed him some bonding time with their baby, Ava. "For the first three weeks, skipping a feeding made my breasts fill up during the night, and it was painful," McGrath says. "But eventually my breasts held tight for eight hours at night." If you try this, make sure to wait until your milk is coming in regularly, which takes a few weeks. Another tip: "Pump one hour after your morning feeding, when your milk supply is best," says Dr. Greenfield.

➔ **For many moms, things get better after the first eight weeks.**

Take naps. You know the one: "Sleep when the baby sleeps." Yes, you have a lot to do, but baby's naptime isn't the *only* possible time to do it. "Get a bouncy seat and a baby carrier so you can be

productive when baby's up, and her naptime can be just for you," says Heather Flett, coauthor of *The Rookie Mom's Handbook*. Flett also suggests learning to nurse while lying down. "The sooner you master this, the sooner you'll learn to drift off while your baby feeds," she says.

Get help. Even type A moms can take time to doze, with some preparation. Pamela Clark, of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, says she couldn't nap "while knowing that the laundry needed to be done, or that there was a pile of dishes in the sink." So she hired someone to clean her house and asked someone else ("usually my mom") to spend an hour or two each day with her newborn, Grace. "Then I could turn off the monitor and allow myself to fall into a deep sleep," Clark says.

Consider other rooming options.

Experts have long disagreed over where baby should sleep—crib versus family bed, within or out of earshot, and so on. Don't count on a definitive verdict anytime soon. Instead, follow this rule of thumb: if your sleeping arrangement is keeping everybody up, try something else.

Sheri Allain, of Toronto, preserved her sleep by putting her daughter Layla's crib in a nursery, one floor below her bedroom. She awakened only when Layla's wails were loud enough to signal real distress. "Babies naturally cry during sleep," Allain says. "You don't always have to rush to them."

➔ Napping during the day isn't easy for lots of moms, but there are things you can do to help your body relax.

Fans of this approach also say that a well-rested mom is probably a better mom during the day.

Jennifer Hunt, a co-sleeping mom, took a far different approach. "I haven't been deprived of sleep with either one of my children," says the Colorado Springs mom. Like all infants, her sons, Jackson and Creede, would wake up at night to eat. But, Hunt adds, "They didn't wake me up by crying, because they had an all-night buffet of breast milk right next to them." Sherry Feldberg's infant daughter, Lily, spends half the night in her crib and the rest in Mom's bed, where breastfeeding is more comfortable for both of them. "I'm not getting eight hours of sleep, but the arrangement is working," says Feldberg, who lives in Framingham, Massachusetts. "Having a king-size bed helps!"

When you manage to get a good stretch of sleep, your whole outlook on life improves dramatically.



Put yourself in the mood for sleep.

Tired as you are, it's not easy to doze on command. Gwen Haynes, of Bowie, Maryland, found that caring for a newborn who slept erratically threw her own clock off kilter. "I would be up at night watching reruns of old '70s shows and crying because my husband and

Miles were asleep and I wasn't," she says. For a month, Miles would wake up just as Haynes was dozing off. This lousy phase passed—as will yours, if you have one.

In the meantime, when sleep opportunities do come, give yourself extra help to relax. "Experiment with earplugs, an eye mask, or a white noise machine," Flett recommends. "Ask your partner to take the baby out for a stroll. Having them out of the house is way more relaxing than lying in bed

wondering what they're doing."

When her son, Connor, was a newborn, Dana Berry, of Centennial, Colorado, hedged against ill-timed insomnia with high-thread-count sheets, room-darkening blinds, and a scented mist by Molton Brown. "I turned my bedroom into a sanctuary," she says.

Talk to your doctor. "Ask her about using an over-the-counter medication, such as Benadryl, which can be

okay while nursing," says Dr. Greenfield. Depending on your situation, your doctor might recommend something stronger. "Just

taking something one or two days a week can make a new mom feel more together," she adds.

And a little rejuvenation could help you to put things in perspective. "I tell my friends with newborns that everything gets significantly better after the first six weeks, especially sleep," says Greensboro, North Carolina, mom Kathryn Whitaker, whose daughter Hannah is now 20 months. "I think it helps them to have a deadline to look forward to."

Indeed, soon enough, your child will no longer keep you up at night. Enjoy the respite—it ends when she's old enough to borrow your car.

Jennifer Graham Kizer, a mother of two, is a writer based in Springfield, New Jersey.

Sleep Savers During Pregnancy

Back pain. Leg cramps. Heartburn. These are just three of the many discomforts a woman might endure during pregnancy. So it's no big surprise that about 78 percent of expectant mothers say they have trouble sleeping. Here are some tips to keep in mind if you're wrestling with this pregnancy pitfall.

➔ **SLEEP STEALER:** With all the extra bodily fluids of pregnancy (not to mention your uterus pushing on your bladder), you're getting up several times a night to use the bathroom.

SLEEP SAVER: "Drink often, but don't drink right before you go to bed," says Marjorie Greenfield, MD, of the Case Medical Center, in Cleveland.

➔ **SLEEP STEALER:** You can't get comfortable with that bowling ball of a belly in the way.

SLEEP SAVER: "Use as many pillows as it takes to wedge yourself into a comfortable position," Dr. Greenfield says.

➔ **SLEEP STEALER:** How can you sleep when your mind is racing about what childbirth will be like? And how on earth are you going to get everything done before then?

SLEEP SAVER: Have a ritual to help you slow down and get your mind ready for sleep. Take a warm bath, read, and put on a white noise machine.

➔ **SLEEP STEALER:** Before you were pregnant, you'd take Ambien if you couldn't sleep. Now you're afraid to take anything.

SLEEP SAVER: "Some medications are safe for sleep in pregnancy," says Dr. Greenfield. "Check with your doctor. He or she might recommend something mild, because being exhausted when you go into labor is a risk factor for c-section."



The discomforts of pregnancy make it hard to sleep. Strategically placed pillows can help.