



How to Reduce Night Wakings

There are 3 common reasons babies wake frequently at night. These are: disturbances within their sleep environment (being too hot or cold, loud noises, light etc); a baby being over or under-tired at bedtime; and needing a certain level of support to get to sleep at night and then waking up to look for that same support as they transition through different stages of sleep. Get these 3 things right and you should be on your way to cutting down those night wakes significantly.



1. Environment

First of all, your little one's sleep environment needs to be perfectly set up for the best night's sleep. That means complete darkness. Use blackout blinds and ensure there is no rogue light from night lights, LED lights, or cracks creeping under doorways or around curtains.

Next, address noise. Use white noise, playing all night long. This will prevent your little one from waking up due to other background noises in the house or on the street outside.

Keep the cot clear of toys and other distractions but include a soft comforter (safely - for babies over 6 months). This comforter can be used for naps in the pram and on-the-go, and will be really helpful in transitions to and from nursery.

The room temperature should be between 16 and 19 degrees. Dress your little one appropriately for the room temperature (see separate guide) and zip them up into a cosy sleeping bag (or swaddle bag for younger babies).



2. Routine

Your little one's routine needs to follow age-appropriate wake windows so that you put them down for a nap before they are overtired and when they are developmentally ready for their next sleep. Regular feeds and sleeps, and ensuring that those sleeps are of appropriate length so that they're restorative - with the longest sleep being in the middle of the day - will set your baby up for the best night.

The amount of sleep a baby needs in a 24-hour period varies from baby-to-baby but also changes monthly, possibly even weekly for little ones, so staying on top of their routine is crucial.

Generally, the shortest wake window is the first one, between morning wake up and the first nap, and the longest one is between their final nap and bedtime.

Do a short 'nap routine' and a consistent, calming bedtime routine and do not be afraid of an early night, especially if the naps have not gone perfectly on that day.

*See separate guide on extending naps for more on this



3. Self-Settling

You can gradually start teaching self-settling whenever you think your baby is ready. It's all about giving your little one opportunities to practise going to sleep without your help. Shushing, patting, stroking and singing are all excellent tools you can use to settle a baby who needs it, but try to gradually reduce the amount of support you offer. If you are currently feeding or rocking to sleep, try to feed or rock to soothe your baby, but put them down while they're still awake. It may not work all the time, but the more opportunities your baby has to practise this, the quicker they will learn the skill.

The first nap of the day is a good one to start with for babies less than 6 months old, and bedtime is often what we suggest for babies older than this. The sleep pressure and hormones will be on your side!

So, parents! Ensure that your baby's sleep environment is perfectly set up for sleep, follow a daytime routine that is age appropriate and suits your baby's sleep needs, and gently teach self-settling, with a particular focus on bedtime. If you get all of these things right then you should be well on your way to the best night's sleep - for all the family!

