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Your Six to Eight Month Old Baby and Sleep

At this age, babies need an average of eleven hours of uninterrupted nighttime sleep and three and a half hours of daytime naps spread over two to three naps.

From six through eight months, babies become more mobile. They roll over, sit up, maybe even stand holding on to something. Many scoot or crawl, and the first teeth come in. Most babies sleep through the night fairly regularly but if yours doesn't, it is still quite easy to get them on track. You may also find that at six or seven months, a baby who had been a good sleeper starts having difficulties. As she experiences her first wave of separation anxiety, she may resist being left in her crib at night, or may start waking up more often to see you.

There is no "right" schedule for all babies, but the sample below is a good framework. Some variation is inevitable; a baby who naps for ninety minutes starting at 9:00 a.m. is not going to be on the same clock as one who naps for two hours starting at 9:30. But the starting point, 7:00 or 7:30 a.m., and the end point, 7:00 or 7:30 p.m., should be about the same. Some babies do seem to have internal alarm clocks that go off at 6:00 a.m., so you may have to shift the schedule, particularly morning naps, a little earlier to accommodate. If she's in child care or with a sitter part of the day, make your home schedule conform as much as possible to the child-care feeding and nap times, as long as that routine is a sensible one. Consistency counts.

Sample schedule:

- 7:00 to 7:30 a.m. Wake-up. Upon waking, nurse/bottle feed and solids (consult your pediatrician about introduction of solid foods).
- 9:00 or 9:30 a.m. Morning nap, 1.5 to 2 hours. Upon waking, nursing/bottle and solids.
- 12:30 or 1:00 p.m. Afternoon nap, 1.5 to 2 hours. Upon waking, nurse/bottle.

3:30–4:00 p.m. (depends on previous nap time) Optional third nap, about 45 minutes to an hour.

5:00 or 5:30 p.m. Nurse/bottle feed and solids.

6:00–6:30 p.m. Start bath/bedtime preparations, which may include an additional bottle or nursing.

7:00–7:30 p.m. Asleep.

The trick is to get your child on the right schedule; try to stick to it pretty regularly but know how to read her cues and modify it a little when appropriate. Some days she'll sleep a little more, some a little less, just like you do (and you don't even have growth spurts).

Other helpful tips:

- This is a great age to begin sleep coaching if your baby is not sleeping well at night and for naps.
- Encourage an attachment to a lovey or security object such as a small stuffed animal.
- Develop a sleep-friendly schedule and introduce appropriate wind-down activities at night; such as massage, a song or book.

If your baby is used to being rocked, walked, nursed, or stroked to sleep, or to get back to sleep in the middle of the night, you will need to help her discard those sleep crutches, sometimes called negative associations. If she's spent the first few months sleeping in unconventional places, like swings or car seats, you need to get her into the crib. As you make changes you may have to tolerate some tears—but you don't have to let her cry endlessly or alone. Sit by her as she cries, stroke her head or pat her back a little; whisper soothing words. Her tears are her way of saying she is tired and frustrated, or wary of this change. But if you let her, she will learn to cope, adapt, and soothe herself to sleep—and it won't take as long as you fear.