



Establishing good sleep habits can stop baby sleep problems before they start, and also avoid a lot of unnecessary stress to you , your partner and your newborn. We catch up with *Pink Parenting's* new sleep expert Judy Clark who shares her 5 top-tips to sleeping that hopefully means you no longer need to kiss your sanity goodnight.



SLEEPING LIKE A BABY

With the arrival of a new baby, it doesn't take long for the topic of sleep to come up and the ensuing sleepless nights that result in the baby never wanting to sleep, even though you and your partner are literally dreaming of a good night's sleep.

I remember being pregnant with my first child and a friend saying to me that I might as well get plenty of sleep now and kiss goodbye to sleep for a long time as babies don't sleep which only gets worse as they get to toddler years!!

I know how painful it is to go through sleepless nights with a child as I went through it myself with my first daughter, she'd wake up

crying every hour demanding to be fed. I tried everything—rocking her, giving her a dummy, lying beside her, walking her in the pram—but nothing seemed to work. I didn't know what to do because no-body had ever really told me anything about how to get my babies to sleep through the night! When pregnant, I read the books available about pregnancy and birth but nothing really explained the importance of sleep to a baby, how sleep associations are formed and the impact they have on us as parents.

When Jannah was only eight weeks old, I reached breaking point. I had been walking her in the pram for an hour trying to get her to sleep and went in to the supermarket to buy a few things. While I ➤



was at the check-out she woke up and started screaming. “Why don’t you feed her?” the checkout girl suggested.

I almost burst into tears. I’d just fed Jannah an hour ago – she couldn’t possibly be hungry! But I had no idea what the problem was. It’s no surprise to me that recent research shows that mums are far more likely to suffer from post-natal depression if their children sleep badly!

When I got home that day I went on the internet and started researching everything I could about getting babies to sleep, I found Canadian, world renowned sleep expert Dana Obleman, and with her help and guidance that night for the first time ever Jannah slept for seven hours straight without waking! Within 3 nights she was sleeping 7pm to 7am with no wakes!!

Sleep is so important to me that I decided to make a career of it! I personally contacted Dana and asked her to teach me her skills so I could help families in the UK, I was privileged that Dana accepted my request and invited me to Canada to personally train me, I am now the UK’s first certified child sleep sense consultant and help families in the UK and abroad achieve results fast.

THE 5 BIGGEST TIPS TO ASSIST YOU IN GETTING YOUR BABY TO SLEEP WELL.

1 STEP ONE – CHOOSE AN EARLY BEDTIME.

The best time to put your baby or toddler to bed is sometime between 6 and 8 o’clock in the evening. This ensures that your child will be able to get a solid 11-13 hours of sleep during the night. (And yes... that is how much sleep children should be getting every night up until the age of about 10.)

2 STEP TWO – PUT YOUR CHILD TO SLEEP IN THE SAME PLACE EVERY NIGHT.

Whether your child has a room of their own or shares a room with parents or siblings, it’s important that you put your son or daughter to sleep in the same place every night (and for naps during the day as much as possible.) Putting your child to bed in a familiar place lets them know they are safe and that they are in a place where sleep is expected of them.

3 STEP THREE – CREATE A PREDICTABLE BEDTIME ROUTINE.

Consistency and predictability are really important to babies and toddlers. When they know what to expect at bedtime, it makes it *much* easier for them to make the transition from waking to sleeping – and that’s why creating a bedtime routine is so important!

A GOOD EXAMPLE OF A BEDTIME ROUTINE MIGHT BE SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

- ▶ **6:20 pm** Bath time
- ▶ **6:35 pm** Put on pyjamas
- ▶ **6:40 pm** Nursing or bottle
(Do NOT let your child fall asleep while feeding!)
- ▶ **6:55 pm** Story or song time
- ▶ **7:00 pm** In to crib or bed

Your bedtime routine shouldn’t take more than about 45 minutes, and it’s VERY important that the routine is the same every single night. The repetition and predictability are what let your child know that he or she will soon be expected to fall asleep.

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4 STEP FOUR – PUT YOUR BABY TO BED AWAKE!

If you’ve been rocking, nursing, or otherwise soothing your baby to sleep, this is going to seem like a tough one... but it’s actually the most important step! It’s only by letting your baby fall asleep WITHOUT your help at bedtime that he or she can learn the skills necessary to stay asleep through the night.

5 STEP FIVE – IF YOUR BABY WAKES UP DURING THE NIGHT, WAIT A FEW MINUTES BEFORE INTERVENING.

Everyone – babies and adults alike – will actually wake up several times every night. For most adults, these wakings are so brief that we don’t even remember them the next morning. However, many babies will immediately start to fuss or cry when they wake up.

This is simply because they haven’t learned how to fall asleep on their own. If a baby has been nursed or rocked to sleep at bedtime since birth, it’s not surprising that they wouldn’t know how to fall asleep independently. The good news is that many babies can figure out how to get back to sleep within just a few minutes of waking up!

If your child continues to fuss or cry for more than a few minutes, you’ll want to go in and offer some comfort, but it’s important to let your child do the work of falling back to sleep. You can speak softly to your child and do some gentle rubbing or patting, but you should avoid picking your child up and rocking or nursing back to sleep.

So there you have it... the 5 most important things you need to know about getting your child to sleep through the night. Of course, it’s important to keep in mind that every child is a little different – there’s no “magic formula” that will work 100% of the time for every baby!

The latest research shows that around 84% of children who are experiencing sleep problems will continue to have them for up to 5 years. This is a very long time for a family to function on a reduction of sleep and a long time to fight bedtime battles. It is never too late to start changing your child’s sleep situation. It can be hard but there is definitely light at the end of the tunnel and in the long run making these small changes will make everyone feel better and well rested and, in my experience, a whole lot happier!

Judy Clark is the Founder of BabyWink Consultancy and is the UK’s first Certified Sleep Sense Child Sleep Consultant. Judy helps families across the World get their little ones to sleep through the night and offers follow up support key to success. For more information please visit www.babywink.com