



5 Daytime Tips for Better Nights

(AND NAPS!)



Good sleep starts when we're *awake*.



When we think about improving our baby's sleep, we tend to focus on what happens right before we put them down. That's definitely important.

But there's also plenty we can do *during* the day to help get great nights and naps. Just remember The 5 Fs™:

✦ Feeding ✦ Fresh Air ✦ Floor Time ✦ Free Play ✦ Face-to-Face

(These can occur in any order.)

1

Feeding

Did you know babies instinctively understand how many calories they need to consume over a 24-hour period? It's TRUE! **And here's the thing: If they don't get enough calories during the day, they'll ask for them at night.**



To help your baby get enough daytime calories:

- **Minimize distractions.** At this age, exploring the world is much more exciting than eating. So, given a choice, many babies will opt for actively engaging in the world, rather than taking full, focused feedings.
- **Offer feedings every 2.5-3.5 hours.** Follow your little one's hunger cues, of course. But during the first year, try not to extend the time between breast or bottle more than 3.5 hours.

2

Fresh Air

Research shows exposure to natural light during the day—especially late morning and early afternoon—helps babies sleep better at night. In part, that’s because sunlight boosts Vitamin D, which is involved in the production of melatonin¹, the sleep hormone.



To work in some melatonin-regulating sunlight:

- **Get outside for part of the day.** If the weather’s not cooperating, pull back the curtains and stand in the sunshine for a few minutes. That works just as well!
- **Think creatively about how to get some sunlight.** Put your baby on your hip, and walk to the mailbox together. Deliver some treats to your nearby neighbors. When you go to the grocery store, park a little farther away from the door than you normally would. Even 30 minutes of indirect sunshine per week² can help.

Bonus:

Spending time outside is good for moms and dads, too! Sunshine boosts our mood, offering some protection against postpartum depression (PPD).

¹Reference; ²Reference

3

Floor Time



Physical activity is important for your baby's brain and body development. You know what else it's good for? *Wearing them out!* **Just like adults sleep better at night when we've moved our bodies during the day, the same is true for little ones.**

To help your baby get plenty of physical activity:

- **Be mindful of "containers."** I know how helpful bouncers, saucers, wraps, and swings can be. Those things are life-savers! We just want to be sure our babies are also getting plenty of time on the floor so they have an opportunity to move those little bodies.
- **Arrange toys to promote movement.** Put interesting objects at opposite ends of the rug so your little one has a good reason to crawl back and forth. Position toys along the edge of the couch to encourage cruising. Play some music and see if they'll mimic your dancing.
- **Take your time when you're running errands.** Little ones spend loads of time going from their car seat to a shopping cart to a stroller and back to a car seat. By the end of the day, we might be exhausted, but they've actually had very little activity. So, if your child is walking, let them toddle next to you for a few minutes before scooping them into a cart or stroller. Your errands will take longer, but your baby will sleep better!



4

Free Play

Parents often feel like they're supposed to entertain their baby all day, going from busy activity to busy activity. But the truth is, little ones need a chance to explore the world on their own terms.

Free play accelerates babies' brain development as they interact with objects in their own way—thinking, making decisions, and problem solving along the way. **And all that mental stimulation can help them sleep better!**

To encourage free play:

- **Treat yourself.** Lay out a blanket with some toys, and while your child explores, read a few pages of that novel you've been neglecting. Take your play yard outside, and enjoy your garden while your baby entertains themselves in a safe environment.
- **Engage in parallel activities.** As you go throughout your day, consider what your child might be able to do alongside you. If you're washing dishes, let them bang some pots and pans. If you're folding laundry, see if they'll play with a pile of dishtowels. Scrubbing the toilet? Plop them in an empty tub, and provide a sponge.

You'll want to supervise all of these activities, of course. You can just let go of *directing* them.



5

Face-to-Face Interaction



Our world offers so many distractions, and it can be tough to be present and in-the-moment with our baby. **But they crave that interaction!**

Uninterrupted face-to-face time provides mental stimulation and promotes language development. It also fosters a confident, secure attachment between parent and child—which makes nighttime and naps so much easier.

To get more face-to-face interaction:

- **Go screen-free.** For at least part of the day, put away your phone and turn off the TV so you and your baby can fully focus on one another. Talk to them, sing to them, and make lots of eye contact.
- **Involve your whole family.** Face-to-face interaction is a good bonding activity for everyone. If you have older kids, have them give your baby some undivided attention, too.



Now... don't stress out over this.

You don't have to work in all five F's during every wake window. This isn't a list of even *more* things for you to try to cram into your busy schedule!

Instead, consider how you can *naturally* work them into your daily rhythm. Try this:

- When your baby wakes in the morning, intentionally make eye contact while you change their diaper.
- As you make your bed in the morning, put your little one on a blanket next to you with a toy or two.
- When you let your dog out, step outside with your baby for a couple of minutes.

Soon, you'll notice how easy it is to use these simple tips to help your baby get their needs met for their physical bodies, their brains, and their emotional attachment. And *that* will set them up for better nights and naps.



You don't have to figure this out on your own!

Wish you had *more* support in the sleep department? I've got you! I've just launched a **new and improved** online sleep package!

The 5-24 Month Collection: Everything You Need for Great Sleep includes:

- *ABCs of Sleep*: Your Plan for Great Nights
- *Conquering Naps*: Your Plan for Great Days
- and *Bumps Along the Way*, which will help you get back on track when life throws you the inevitable sleep curveballs (Hello, potty training, traveling, and regressions!)

I've helped thousands of families get better nights and naps. I can help yours, too!

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♡ Cara



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