YOUNG CHILDREN ARE not asleep for eight hours and then awake all day, as most adults are. First, they fall asleep, then they wake up a little bit, then they fall asleep again.

Both the amount and the pattern of sleep change from child to child and, of course, change as a baby grows. Newborn and very young babies are asleep most of the time; they alternate periods of sleep and periods of wakefulness six to ten times within 24 hours, with an average of 18 to 21 hours of sleep. Two- to three-year-olds average 12 to 14 hours of sleep.

Everything that happens to your baby during the day can influence her sleep pattern. Young babies get tired often during the day, and if not distracted, would fall asleep. When parents complain about their babies’ sleep patterns, they usually do not consider how their daily activities influence sleep.

Unfortunately in our busy society too few infants are given the opportunity to follow a natural, predictable daily routine. Often infants must adapt to the schedules of other members of the family. That means infants are not allowed to follow their biological clocks.

It is not easy for a family to juggle all duties without disrupting a baby’s sleep-wake pattern.

Your goal is to help your baby develop good sleeping habits.
Educating in Daily Life

**Developing Good Sleep Habits**

The easiest way to develop good habits in general is to have a predictable daily life.

Does your baby spend plenty of time outdoors? (See, *Outdoor Living*, page 103) Building a room-size outdoor playpen is an excellent investment. Napping outdoors (protected from the sun) is a good habit.

Young babies thrive on routine. Ideally, daily events of eating, sleeping, bathing, outdoor play, etc., happen around the same time and in the same sequence each day. As the baby is learning to anticipate the next event, many conflicts are eliminated. A mutual adaptation of the biological rhythm of your baby and your family schedule develops. It also enables you, the parent, to plan for those blocks of time when your baby is usually napping or playing peacefully.

**Recognizing Tiredness**

I believe that you cannot go wrong letting children rest when they need it and giving them a very peaceful environment. After a slow-paced day, infants are more likely to sleep peacefully throughout the night.

Sensitively watch for the very first signs of tiredness (slowing down, closing eyes, being less focused, being irritable). That is the time an infant is ready for sleep. As time goes by, increased tiredness may build resistance—and once the “second wind” hits, going to sleep becomes an ordeal for both your baby and you. An overtired child sleeps restlessly, wakes up more often during the night, and gets up grouchy, too early in the morning.

Stress and overstimulation can also cause exhaustion, irritability and resistance to sleep.

Many parents I have advised have learned with surprise and delight that, contrary to their fear early in the evening did not make morning. Indeed, their babies ofte morning, adding hours of sleep.

**Putting Your Baby to Bed**

Parents often find that the easies is to give her a bottle or nurse he however, that as an infant becomes her environment, it is better to pu somewhat awake. Waking up in a cri been put there can be disorienting ar are lifted into their cribs when asl because of the sudden change (goin tion to lying flat).

**A Pre-Bedtime Ritual**

As bedtime approaches, create a progressively slower paced and mo know the lovely book by Margaret Moon, in which, page by page, the evoking a sleepy mood? This is the toward.

Repeating a simple pre-bedtime ready gradually. For example, mak while putting away toys can be help basket here in the corner; your doll s will stay here until morning, when yo. Such comments build a bridge betw row” and provide a sense of continu

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delight that, contrary to their fears, putting babies to bed very
early in the evening did not make them wake up earlier in the
morning. Indeed, their babies often woke up much later in the
morning, adding hours of sleep.

Putting Your Baby to Bed

Parents often find that the easiest way to put their baby to bed
is to give her a bottle or nurse her to sleep. I have observed,
however, that as an infant becomes more aware of herself and of
her environment, it is better to put her down while she is still
somewhat awake. Waking up in a crib with no memory of having
been put there can be disorienting and scary. Younger babies who
are lifted into their cribs when asleep may wake up confused
because of the sudden change (going from a more upright posi-
tion to lying flat).

A Pre-Bedtime Ritual

As bedtime approaches, create an atmosphere that becomes
progressively slower paced and more quiet. Do you happen to
know the lovely book by Margaret Wise Brown, *Good Night
Moon*, in which, page by page, the room darkens, gradually
evoking a sleepy mood? This is the feeling I suggest you work
toward.

Repeating a simple pre-bedtime ritual helps your baby to get
ready gradually. For example, making a habit of commenting
while putting away toys can be helpful: “The ball goes into this
basket here in the corner; your doll sits on the top shelf; the toys
will stay here until morning, when you can play with them again.”
Such comments build a bridge between “tonight” and “tomor-
row” and provide a sense of continuity and security.

Then you may continue, “I am going to pull the curtains now,
Educaring in Daily Life

then I will turn off the big light and put on the night light, then I will go into the other room.” As your infant grows older, she may take over the role and have such monologues herself.

Some infants have a special bed companion, a “lovey” such as a teddy bear or blanket (also referred to as a transitional object). Putting your child and her lovey to bed, you may talk to the bear, “Have a peaceful rest. I will cover both Alison and you so that the two of you will feel comfortable and cozy. Are you ready for your lullaby?” (You may want to sing or wind up a music box—a little music is a soothing way to end a day.) Finally, caress your baby gently and say, “Good night. I’ll see you in the morning.”

Falling, and Not Falling, Asleep

As you can see, I am giving you ideas of how you can create an atmosphere conducive to rest.

But remember, nobody can make another person fall asleep. How to relax and let sleep come is a skill your child, like everybody else, must learn all by herself.

Children also wake up several times during the night and learn how to ease themselves back into sleep (unless they have a need or get scared).

Some children seem to really need to cry themselves to sleep. Sometimes just letting them cry those extra parent-painful minutes before sleep can be helpful.

Theories and fads keep changing, from advising you to sleep together in the “family bed,” to putting the infant far enough away not to be disturbed by his crying.

Be prepared that there will be times when a child may become reluctant to fall asleep: when she comes down with a sickness, shortly before a spurt of new development, or during certain vulnerable times of emotional growth (of separation anxiety).

Do not expect a magic formula; son cannot be isolated from the rest of the e

Your overall attitude can make a diff for “poor baby” who must go to bed—good it feels to rest when you are tired wake up refreshed.

Dorothy was much fussier and more first child. It seemed she would never sl I would nurse her, rock her, jiggle her or be put down at all. I really felt at my wit some babies just need a lot more atten less sleep than others, and I guessed th

It’s hard for me to believe the trans through as a result of my taking Magd College]. To begin with, and despite m try Magda’s suggestion that babies spen floor. I put Dorothy on her back with astonishment, rather than crying, she res fact spent the first few times figuring he that she could entertain herself.

Then I brought Dorothy with me I was uncomfortable leaving her at her had all of us “observe” her, and I was s Dorothy seemed quietly playing, rollin while we watched. I realized how much in her, since learning to let her play o

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Sleeping

vulnerable times of emotional growth (such as during the stage
of separation anxiety).

Do not expect a magic formula; sometimes one problem area
cannot be isolated from the rest of the everyday life of your baby.

Your overall attitude can make a difference. Do not feel sorry
for “poor baby” who must go to bed—rather remember how
good it feels to rest when you are tired, and how nice it feels to
wake up refreshed.


Dorothy was much fussier and more dependent on me than my
first child. It seemed she would never sleep, no matter how much
I would nurse her, rock her, jiggle her or pat her, and she hated to
be put down at all. I really felt at my wit’s end; but I had read that
some babies just need a lot more attention and comfort and a lot
less sleep than others, and I guessed that’s who Dorothy was.

It’s hard for me to believe the transformation we’ve both gone
through as a result of my taking Magda’s class [at Pacific Oaks
College]. To begin with, and despite my skepticism, I decided to
try Magda’s suggestion that babies spend some time playing on the
floor. I put Dorothy on her back with a few toys near her. To my
astonishment, rather than crying, she really enjoyed herself and in
fact spent the first few times figuring how to roll over. I discovered
that she could entertain herself.

Then I brought Dorothy with me to an all-day class, since I
was uncomfortable leaving her at home for eight hours. Magda
had all of us “observe” her, and I was so proud at how comfortable
Dorothy seemed quietly playing, rolling, stretching, and reaching
while we watched. I realized how much more delight I was finding
in her, since learning to let her play on her own.

After about an hour, when Dorothy started to fuss mildly, I

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