

ASK THE PRECEPTOR

“Typical” advice* on parenting from preceptors at:

- Ravenswood Family Health Center
- Kaiser Permanente
- Palo Alto Medical Foundation
- Gardner Packard Children’s Health Center

* To be modified based on exploration of family’s perspective, context, other detail

ASK THE PRECEPTOR – INFANT SLEEP

Parents of a newborn ask when and how to help the baby sleep through the night.

I would generally say that it is very normal to have night awakenings for feeding in the first few months of life. In the newborn period, I would not let the baby go more than 5 hours without feeding. Babies can reliably sleep through the night without needing night feedings closer to 4 months and sometimes earlier as long as they are growing well. It is important to have caregivers be on the same page/be consistent regarding their approach.

I generally like the approach to let babies cry for 5 minutes to see if they will settle on their own even from the very beginning. Crying will not harm the baby. Beyond that, there are many different ways to approach sleep from a more rigid schedule (Babywise) to letting it happen naturally. I also think it is important for babies to learn to self soothe and that we can help guide that through this process.

Other tips: I have found many parents like the approach of gradually increasing the time they let their babies cry at night to allow the opportunity to see if the baby is not hungry and just needs to sleep. Babies naturally and understandably enjoy the presence and feeding from a parent for comfort so they are learning to be comforted without needing that. If you are breastfeeding, it can help to have your partner go into the room.

Resources:

- 1) https://www.babycenter.com/0_baby-sleep-training-the-basics_1505715.bc
- 2) <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/Getting-Your-Baby-to-Sleep.aspx>

If baby not sleeping through the night by age 4 months, then time to suggest. But, first make sure both parents are on board to work on this otherwise nothing will work! I tell parents that a good napper is a good sleeper at night and that the key to a good sleeper in general is a baby who can get herself to sleep and back to sleep when she awakens at night. Parents should not be rocking or nursing a baby to sleep.

I have recommended getting the baby drowsy, then transferring the baby to a warmed crib surface (like using a heating pad and then removing it and checking that crib surface not hot !) and even using a piece of clothing that smells like the mom in the transfer process, taking it away after baby placed in crib, using pacifier, etc.

Another key is not co-sleeping. If a baby is in the bed with the parents, no sleep training will work. Eventually the child will sleep through the night but that may not happen 'til 1-2 years old or longer! I ask the parents if they are willing to wait for that.

Basically sleep training is up to the parents and I open the conversation/ discuss depending on where they are. I could go on about Ferber method here and I do with parents if they are open to it. ("de-escalating" the cry, "change the expectation" of the baby that he /she will be picked up , fed, etc .) One thing that I think helps, is right off soon after birth, parents should be using a pacifier and also not fret and get anxious if a baby has to "wait" or cry briefly when a parent has to do something (like cook or use the bathroom). I

It is amazing how many new parents cannot get over the idea of their infant not being picked up and calmed in seconds! One other thing, if parents don't have a separate bedroom, then, by age 6-9 months, they need to have some sort of barrier, like a screen, so that the waking infant does not see the parents and cry for them while trying sleep training.

I tell parents right from the beginning that we are not going to start talking about sleep until the 2 month visit because I don't want them to stress about it before then (there are too many other things to worry about).

At the 2 month visit, I tell parents to start establishing a bed time, somewhere between 6:30 and 8:30 pm. I explain that if they put the infant to sleep when s/he is overtired, then the child will never go into a deep sleep and will not start to do one long stretch per night. I also explain that at this age, an infant will do one long stretch (5-8 hours) and then will start waking every 2-3 hours after that time. Also at this age, I explain that they should establish an easy routine to help the baby cue that it is bedtime, i.e., taking a bath, reading a book, singing a song. I explain that this should be quick and should be able to duplicated wherever they are.

At the 4 month visit, I start talking about naps. I explain that they should be putting their child down for a nap after s/he has been awake for 1.5-2 hours. I explain that the naps can be as short as 30 minutes or as long as a couple of hours. I explain that the schedule may be different everyday, since the duration and timing of the naps may be different each day. I also say that at least one of the naps should be in the crib, but if they need to be out and about for the other naps, that is ok.

I don't make any absolutes about when the infant should be sleeping through the night. I think this is a culturally sensitive topic, and for some working families, it is easier to just feed the baby in the night rather than try to sleep train. At 6 months and 9 months, I will talk about other ways to soothe the baby in the night, other than feeds, but again, this is never an absolute.

When parents ask about sleep training, I discuss that there are many ways to do this, and they have to find what feels best for them and what they think they can do the most consistently. I also explain that this is not a one-time training, and that they will have to do this type of training again after traveling, bad illnesses, developmental milestones, etc.

Babies, especially newborns, are hard. It's natural for babies, especially newborns, not to sleep for long periods of time without waking. From the beginning, you can begin to set good sleep habits by giving your baby a dark, quiet, and safe place to sleep. At night especially you want to keep the environment dark and quiet to encourage their internal circadian clock to recognize that nighttime is for sleeping. During the day, you can keep the lights brighter and noise a little louder to encourage their circadian clock to recognize that daytime is for play. Generally by 6-8 weeks most babies figure out the difference between day and night.

***This is generally where I stop at the newborn visit as parents are often already overwhelmed, but follows are my complete thoughts on the subject for your reading enjoyment. :)

Newborns 0-3 months old generally do not have the ability to self-soothe, so at this young age please soothe the baby to sleep in whatever way works: rocking, swaddling, sucking (on pacifier or breast or bottle), white noise, etc. It's all about survival in these early months, so get to know your baby and do what works, as long as it's safe! If you have a rockstar sleeper that is able to be put down while "drowsy but awake" and then fall asleep on their own, that's great! But if you don't, don't fret - your baby is still very young and needs you.

Between 4-6 months you definitely want to keep working on good sleep habits. Try to come up with a soothing sleep-time routine (feeding, bath, quiet books, etc) prior to sleep to prepare them to rest. Keep trying to put your baby down "drowsy but awake", they just might surprise you one day and fall asleep! Some gentle sleep training where you gradually try to reduce the amount of soothing that you do can be appropriate at this age as well.

After 6 months of age, most babies should have the ability to learn to self-soothe to sleep. There are many "sleep training" methods out there from "cry it out" to gradually reducing your soothing techniques, all in an attempt to teach your baby how to fall asleep independently. It is best to first use your sleep training method to help the baby fall asleep at the start of the night when they are the most tired. The general thought is that if a baby can fall asleep independently, they should be able to put themselves back to sleep when they arouse in the middle of the night more easily. As a parent, you need to decide for yourself how much, if any, "crying it out" you are willing to do. It really is a personal decision. Some parents are comfortable letting their babies cry until they fall asleep at night regardless of how long it takes. Others are willing to respond to every cry until their baby eventually figures out how to sleep on their own (which will happen, someday!). There is not a right or wrong answer... but after 6 months if you want to try a formal version of "sleep training", it is generally thought that your baby should be able to respond to it.

ASK THE PRECEPTOR – STARTING BOTTLES

Parents of a breastfed 6-week-old need help getting her to accept a bottle so her mother can go back to work.

- Now is a great time to start and if you have someone other than mom to give the bottle that might make the transition easier; Often having mom outside the house works even better
- Try when baby is not starving but also not full; Breast feed a little then offer the bottle
- Try to stimulate the rooting reflex by rubbing the cheek and feed baby when he/she is calm and in a comfortable position; sometimes one other than the same as breastfeeding might help like facing forward
- Often a slow flow nipple works best
- Feed baby the bottle at least once a week before starting work to keep the practice up!
- The resources below give lots of great other tips that emphasize there are so many different strategies and every baby is different! But it will work out!

Resources:

- 1) https://www.babycenter.com/0_introducing-your-breastfed-baby-to-the-bottle-or-cup_473.bc
- 2) <https://yourkidstable.com/my-baby-wont-take-a-bottle/>
- 3) https://www.babycenter.com/400_how-can-i-get-my-baby-to-take-a-bottle_500130_1.bc
- 4) <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/breastfeeding/Pages/Introducing-the-Bottle.aspx>

Bottles (and pacifiers) can be introduced at age 2 weeks. Expressed milk in a bottle gives the dad a chance to feed baby.

So, hopefully by age 6 weeks, a baby will take a bottle. Mom should not be around; she should leave the house and let other caretakers give the bottle if the infant is stubborn about bottles!

The baby knows if the "source" is around and will prefer mom. That being said, if I have a parent going to work and it is the night before and the baby still won't take a bottle from a

parent, I tell my parents, don't worry. She WILL take the bottle because she has no choice (gets hungry!) and it is not mom or dad. This advice has never failed me. I have had parents send me messages that the baby did just fine and why did they worry!

At the 1 month visit, I recommend starting one bottle of expressed breast milk per day. I explain that this can be given by anyone. I stress the importance that if they aren't giving a bottle daily by 2 months, that the baby may refuse the bottle, which can make it difficult for mom to go back to work.

At the 2 month visit, I make sure they are giving the bottle daily, and if not, I stress again that the baby can refuse the bottle if they don't establish bottle feeding, just once per day, now.

If parents are thinking about adding formula at some point after 4 months of age, I recommend that they mix formula and breast milk together at first, to help the infants get used to the taste. I find that baby's tastes are more set by 4 months, but often before 4 months of age, they may be able to get away with starting just straight formula.

6 weeks is actually a good time to start. If a new mom knows she's going back to work at a certain time, I recommend not starting a bottle before 4 weeks old (to avoid nipple confusion), but starting to practice at some point before 8-10 weeks old (after which point some babies will refuse the bottle because they are so used to the breast). If possible, have someone who is not the breastfeeding mother offer the bottle while the breastfeeding mother is in a separate room. Use a low flow nipple and pay attention to baby's cues to help pace the feed. Continue to offer the bottle once or twice per week just to keep in practice before the separation occurs.

ASK THE PRECEPTOR – STARTING SOLIDS

Parents of 4-month-old want advice on when and how to start solids.

I talk about this at the 4 month visit, when I recommend starting solids once per day. Some parents want really explicit guidelines, so I tell them to start with oatmeal cereal (not rice, due to arsenic in rice products), and then to start fruits, vegetables and meats. I no longer tell them to introduce 1 new food every 2-3 days. I just tell them to give the babies the foods that the family enjoys eating. Some parents believe they should introduce vegetables before fruits, and I say that it really doesn't matter.

I explain that everything should be pureed or soft chunks, until they are about 7-8 months old. I also explain that babies who do a lot of spitting up in the first few months of life, will do a lot of gagging with solids, especially with soft chunks. These babies will actually do better with more crunchy items, like bread, cereal and puffs.

With all the new evidence on allergens, I tell parents to introduce egg, yogurt, cheese and even nut butters starting at 6 months of age. I also recommend giving low mercury fish. At the 6 month visit, I just tell them to avoid honey.

When starting solids, I explain that this is not replacing breast milk or formula. I have them give solids 1-1.5 hours before or after the breast or bottle. I say it also helps to have others in the family eating at the same time. My rule of thumb is to offer solids once per day from 4-6 months, twice per day between 6-7 months, and to get to three times per day by 8 months. I explain that usually by 8-9 months, the breast and bottle feeds are down to 4-5 times per day plus the 3 solid meals.

Finally, I explain that babies may take 10-15 tries of a new food before they start to like it. I also discuss that a rash on the face where a food touches does not mean that the child is allergic. I explain that foods are acidic, and if we rubbed them all over our face like a baby does, we would also get rashes.

At age 4 months baby may certainly be ready . Besides making sure baby can sit up with some support, look for cues:

- Reaches for parents' food
 - Cries when parents eating food
 - Formula/breastfeeding intervals more frequent than normal, etc.
 - I always start with oatmeal, never rice.
 - I love avocado as a first food, too.
-

- 1) You can start any time between 4-6 months of age but there is no immediate rush and nutrition will be a mix of formula/breast milk and solids with solids taking more of a role by 12 months of age
- 2) At first, baby will just be experiencing what it is like to take a spoon and taste new textures but the amount will be minimal to teaspoons and gradually increase
- 3) You can try any food including allergenic ones (milk-based products, soy, peanuts, fish, shellfish, soy, citrus, nuts) and try to introduce those by 6 months of age. If there is a history of food allergy or severe eczema (see handout). The only foods to wait on are honey because of botulism risk and cow's milk until one year of age
- 4) Start with single vegetables, fruits or single grain cereal (oatmeal, whole grain) and give the same food for 3 days to look for a reaction. A food allergy can be vomiting, rash, diarrhea, or breathing difficulty. Check with your doctor if you have any concerns.
- 5) Learn your baby's cues that they are done eating which may include closing their mouth, turning their head or using their hands to push it away. It is important they learn how to regulate the amount of food and not have to finish the plate.
- 6) Have fun with it! Babies will need to taste foods many times to like them and a funny face does not mean they don't like it. You can make your own or buy baby food and you can spice it up too!

Resources

- 1) <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Switching-To-Solid-Foods.aspx>
 - 2) https://www.babycenter.com/0_introducing-solids_113.bc
 - 3) <http://www.foodinsight.org/starting-solids-infant-feeding-safety-homemade-vitamin-mineral>
 - 4) <http://www.aaaai.org/aaaai/media/medialibrary/pdf%20documents/libraries/preventing-allergies-15.pdf>
-

Most babies are ready to start solids around 6 months of age. Being ready to eat solids is a developmental milestone, not something you can force a baby to do. In general, your baby is ready when they can sit with a little support, when they open their mouth when offered a spoonful of food, and when they can swallow that spoonful of food without pushing the food back out with their tongue. If you try solids and your baby doesn't seem ready, wait 1-2 weeks and try again. When your baby is ready, start offering solids just once a day for practice. You can start with any type of puree (baby rice cereal, baby oatmeal, or any pureed fruit or veggie). In the beginning, only offer one ingredient at a time. That way, if your baby has a reaction to a certain food, you'll know which one is the culprit.

Healthy Habits Start Early: Tips for Introducing Solid Foods

Starting solid foods is an important part of your baby's development. Use these tips to start solid foods off right — and set your baby on the road to healthy eating for life!



Is your baby ready?

Most babies are ready for solids at around 6 months. Look for these signs:

- He can sit up mostly on his own
- He can hold his head up for a long time
- He's interested in mealtime — for example, he might try to grab food off your plate
- He continues to be hungry between nursing or bottle feeding
- He doesn't automatically push food out of his mouth with his tongue (young babies have a "tongue-thrust reflex" that fades as they get older)



Why is it important to wait until your baby is ready?

Starting solid foods too early makes it more likely that your child will have a hard time staying at a healthy weight.

Keep giving your baby breast milk or formula.

It's important to know that for the first year of life your baby will still get most of her nutrition from breast milk or formula — even after she starts eating solid foods.



Choose healthy drinks.

- If you want to give your baby something to drink during meals with solid foods, offer water.
- Sugary drinks (even 100% juice!) add unneeded calories and can harm your baby's teeth.
- Keep cereal out of the bottle (unless otherwise directed by a physician) — it adds unneeded calories to your baby's diet.



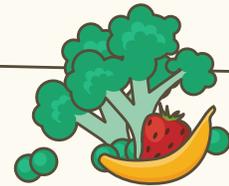
Offer simple foods made for babies.

Cereals for babies and jarred baby food are both good options.



Watch for signs that your baby is done eating.

If your baby turns his head away from food or keeps his lips shut, he's done eating. Don't force him to eat more — when he starts solids, your baby is developing important eating skills, including understanding and trusting his own hunger and fullness cues.



Give fruits and veggies at every meal — and snack time, too.

Babies form their taste patterns by 9 months old. So when your baby starts to feed herself finger foods like cereal and crackers, make sure she keeps eating fruits and veggies.

Get your family and child care providers on board.

You know your baby better than anyone — and you can tell when he's hungry or full. Make sure your baby's caregivers also know his hunger and fullness cues so they won't overfeed him.



Introduce a variety of solid foods to avoid picky eating later on.

Let your baby try a bunch of different colors, flavors and textures. Babies who eat a variety of foods are less likely to be picky eaters — and they may get more nutrients, too.

Stick with it.

It can take as many as 10 to 15 tries over several months for a child to get used to a new flavor. Remember, you only need to offer a spoonful or two each time, not a whole bowl. Keep trying — it's worth it!



It takes time and practice for children to learn to eat solid foods. Your warmth and patience through this process will help set your child up for healthy growth and development.

For more information, visit www.healthychildren.org/growinghealthy.

This product was developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics Institute for Healthy Childhood Weight. Development of this product was made possible through a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



American Academy of Pediatrics
Institute for Healthy
Childhood Weight
WHERE LIFELONG RESULTS BEGIN