

# Understanding Sleep After Baby: Managing Sleep Deprivation and Finding Support



## Highlights

Many new parents experience disrupted sleep because newborn babies require care and attention day and night.

The early weeks and months of parenthood can be challenging as you adjust to broken sleep and new sleep patterns.

Lack of sleep can affect your energy levels, mood, and cognitive function.

Sleep disturbances after childbirth may be linked to mental health issues, such as anxiety or postnatal depression.

There are strategies and support available to help improve sleep after having a baby.

## In This Article

Will my sleep be affected after having a baby?

What can less sleep mean for parents and carers?

Understanding newborn sleep patterns

How can I get more sleep after having a baby?

Other problems related to lack of sleep after having a baby

When should I see my doctor?

Tools And Assistance

## **Will my sleep be affected after having a baby?**

Disrupted sleep is common due to the constant care newborns require. Newborns sleep 14 to 17 hours in 24 hours, but their sleep cycles are short, and they wake frequently for feeds.

## **What can less sleep mean for parents and carers?**

Sleep deprivation is a significant challenge for new parents, impacting both physical and mental health.

Lack of sleep can lead to tiredness, irritability, concentration problems, memory issues, anxiety, low mood, and distress.

Being sleep-deprived can also make it harder to care for your baby and lead to emotional overwhelm.

## **Understanding newborn sleep patterns**

Newborns sleep 6 to 8 times a day, with each sleep period lasting 2 to 4 hours. By around 4 weeks, babies begin to develop a day-night sleep pattern, sleeping more during the night.

Encourage a consistent sleep routine by letting natural daylight into your home, setting a day and night routine, and having a bedtime ritual.

## **How can I get more sleep after having a baby?**

### **Sleep tips for you and your baby**

Establish a bedtime routine and focus less on sleep duration.

Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and screen time before bed.

Engage in physical activity and spend time outdoors during the day with your baby.

### **Napping and catching up on sleep**

Nap when your baby sleeps during the day to recover from sleep deprivation.

Even simply resting without sleeping can help reduce the effects of sleep deprivation.

## **Tips for handling frequent night-time feeds**

Share overnight feeds with your partner or support person.

Ask for help with tasks like nappy changes and settling your baby after feeds.

Consider going to bed early or letting your support person handle the morning duties while you sleep in.

## **Getting help**

Seek assistance from your partner or family to care for older children or household tasks, giving you more time to rest.

Ask someone to look after your baby while you take a nap, especially after breastfeeding.

## **Self-care and support**

It's essential to prioritize self-care. Emotional and practical support from loved ones can greatly improve your wellbeing.

## **Other problems related to lack of sleep after having a baby**

Chronic sleep deprivation can contribute to mental health issues, such as anxiety, stress, and postnatal depression.

Hormonal changes or concerns about the baby may cause sleep disturbances even when the baby is asleep.

In rare cases, sleep deprivation may signal postpartum psychosis.

## **When should I see my doctor?**

Disturbed sleep may sometimes lead to suicidal thoughts. If this happens, seek immediate help.

If lack of sleep is affecting your mood, your ability to care for your baby, or your mental clarity, it's important to consult a doctor.

Seek help if sleep problems become unmanageable, or if you find yourself excessively worrying about your baby.

## **Tools and Assistance**

**Parenting Support Services**You can reach out to various parenting support services that provide guidance and emotional support for new parents. These services can offer advice on sleep patterns, newborn care, and managing the challenges of parenthood.

**Mental Health Services**If sleep deprivation is affecting your mental health, consider seeking help from a mental health professional. Therapy or counseling can help you navigate feelings of anxiety, stress, or postnatal depression. There are also support groups where you can connect with others who understand what you're going through.

**Sleep Consultants**If you're struggling with your baby's sleep patterns, a sleep consultant can offer personalized advice and strategies to help both you and your baby get better sleep.

**Local Support Groups**Many local communities have parent groups that offer peer support. These groups can help you share experiences and learn from others in a similar situation.

**Healthcare Providers**Consult with your doctor or midwife if sleep deprivation is causing concern or if you need specific advice about your or your baby's health. Healthcare professionals can guide you on when to seek further help or refer you to specialists, if necessary.

**Nursing Support**Lactation consultants or breastfeeding support groups can assist if sleep issues are related to breastfeeding challenges. They can help with techniques for feeding and managing sleep disruptions caused by feeding schedules.

**Family and Friends**Don't hesitate to ask family members or close friends for help with babysitting or taking on household chores so that you can get some much-needed rest.