

*soundsleep*  
baby sleep coach



Combating  
Cat napping



## Let's talk naps!

Babies have very active brains and are growing and developing rapidly! It is because of this that babies require so much restorative sleep. This is where the importance of napping comes in. As children learn and grow each day, they build up sleep pressure in their brains more quickly than adults, and the only way to relieve this pressure is to nap. Resting the brain therefore becomes a biological necessity as children are not able to tolerate being awake for long periods of time.

When waking from naps, children are much happier, calmer, and ready to learn. Sleep science tells us that infants and children will experience different stages of sleep for their naps, depending on how many naps they take. If they have more naps, they will stay in a lighter stage of sleep with shorter sleep cycles. When children take fewer naps in the day, they are more likely to sleep longer and deeper. This does not mean to cut your little one's naps. This will come when they are developmentally ready.

Naps tend to be a big frustration among so many parents, but they do not need to be. It is important to remember that every baby is unique, and what works for one baby doesn't necessarily work for the next. Since every baby is different, their daytime sleep totals will also be different. In order to respect their differences, you as their parent really need to tune into your baby's lead and look for their natural rhythm. Forcing a baby onto a schedule based solely on "age appropriate awake times" is only going to lead to frustration and disappointment.



## **Short nappers/Cat nappers**

It is important to remember that short naps of one sleep cycle are actually really common AND biologically normal until around 5-6 months of age. Genetics and your little one's temperament both play a role in nap time patterns. Sensitive babies tend to take shorter naps and can be more difficult to resettle, but not impossible!

Unfortunately, some babies just take short naps, no matter what you try. Accepting this can be hard as all we can see, in the moment, is that your baby is not following the "normal" sleep expectations for their age, or you're frustrated that you can't get done what you need to during the day or you shift to worry that you may be, somehow, harming your baby's development by them not having longer naps.

### **Remember, cat napping is normal!**

If your baby wakes from their 20-40 minute nap and seems happy and well-rested, then it might be time to accept that they may just be a cat napper. If this is your little one, try shifting your focus to things you **can** control, like how your baby feels about sleep, what you **can** do in that 30 minutes, that your baby is healthy and happy.

## CAUSES

If your baby was taking longer naps after 4-months of age, and has now started taking short naps, there may be a reason or there may be something you can do.

It is important to think back to when the naps changed. If it has been less than 2 weeks, some causes may be:

### Development:

When babies are working on a new skill, not only can their night sleep affected (sometimes a middle of the night party), but their naps may also become shorter. Often it is harder for them to fall asleep and harder for them to stay asleep. You may even see them working on those new skills in their sleep space until they master it.

### Teething Pain or Discomfort:

If your baby is suddenly taking really short naps and seems to be fussier than usual during awake time, it is possible that they may be getting a tooth, they may have caught a cold or may just be generally uncomfortable. If you have recently introduced a new food, consider logging your food to see if there is a pattern with shorter naps and food.

If it has been going on for more than two weeks, the short nap might be happening because of:

### Overtired:

Missing our window for sleep can lead to an increase in cortisol and therefore when baby does fall asleep it is possible that they are going to sleep with cortisol in their system. This can lead to a short nap as cortisol is a stress hormone that helps you get up and stay awake.

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## Not tired enough:

For some babies, the window before the nap may not be big enough, and they may not have built up enough sleep pressure.

## Overstimulated:

Think about the days that you are out socialising with friends, or out at an event, or something exciting - it can be hard to wind down right after, leading to a struggle to fall asleep, leaving your baby overtired and leading to the shorter nap.

Some parents will plan a full day (or days) out of the house with their babies and for little ones who do not nap on the go, because everything is too exciting, this can lead to an overstimulated little one and short naps - try following the "every second day" rule, so you can have a day at home to catch up.

## What can you do?

### Adjust Wake Windows (if possible):

If you think your baby might be 'overtired', or not tired enough, try adjusting the wake windows slightly to see what happens +/- 15 minutes.. Remember that you do not want to turn nap time into a fight. If you are going to adjust the wake windows, set expectations and remain calm.

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## Bring Back the Nap:

If you feel that you dropped the nap too soon, try bringing it back. Try not to get frustrated if your baby will not take the nap again. My rule is to try for up to 20-30 minutes MAX and if it is not happening, stop and go do something else. Using motion (the pram, car or carrier) may help with this as your baby may fall asleep when they are outside and on the go.

## Try Extending the Nap:

If you can, use motion, in arms or feeding to get your little one back to sleep. Plan for the wake up to happen and be there, ready, at 25 minutes with a hand on them and ready to help them get back to sleep if they do wake. Sometimes this can help to start building a pattern of longer sleep.

## Add more contact, closeness and proximity:

If there has been a change recently in your little one's life, it is important to remember that we need to be there to support them. If they, for example, are away from you all day because you have returned back to work, and then are sleeping in their crib (again away from you) all night, when you are together at nap time, they may prefer to play or cuddle with you. It is important to be aware of this. When you do have time together, make sure that you are giving them attention and try to be as present as possible

## Add a comfort item or lovey:

In a similar way, if they are now at daycare in an unfamiliar environment, they may not be comfortable enough yet to fall asleep for a long nap. If your baby is over 7 months you can safely introduce a comforter. This is a great way to bridge that separation that they are not yet able to handle and make nap time more comfortable.



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## Offer a top-up feed

If your little one is under 6 months of age or you've just started solids, you may want to try to offer a top-up feed 15-20 minutes before nap time. Be sure to have at least 10 minutes between the feed and them going down for their nap so they do not develop a new association of feed to sleep for their nap.

## Nap Routine

Introduce a short nap routine, around 10 minutes, before they go down for their nap. Go into their sleep space, preferably have the blinds already closed and white noise on, read bub a book, have a cuddle, sing them a song, then put them down for their nap. Having this short time in their low stimulation sleep space can aid in relaxation and calm for sleep.

## The Pre-emptive strike

If you have determined the length of your baby's sleep cycle is 30-40 minutes, quietly go into the room 5 minutes before they usually wake, place a hand on their tummy, nappy, back or chest and watch and listen for bub to stir as they comes into the light sleep cycle. When you notice this stir, softly shh and pat or gently rock on their tummy/nappy/back. Not so much as to wake bub but just to help the, transition into the next sleep cycle.

Continue this for up to 15 minutes. Somedays it may only take 5, others it may take the whole 15. Be consistent for 5 days to see if this works for bub.

**You've got this! This too shall pass. Trust your instincts and follow your heart.**



# How much sleep?

Age	Daytime Sleep	Night time Sleep	Total Sleep
1 month	7 (5 naps)	8-10	15.5
3 months	5 (4-3 naps)	10-12	15
6 months	3.25 (3 naps)	10-12	14-14.5
9 months	3 (2 naps)	10-12	14
12 months	3 (2 naps)	10-12	13-14
18 months	2.5 (1 nap)	10-12	13-14
2 years	1.5-2 (1 nap)	10-12	13-14
3 years	1-1.5 (1nap)	10-11	12



# Awake Windows

Age	Waketime Length
0- 6 Weeks	45-60 minutes
2 Months	1 hour
3 Months	1 - 1.5 hours
4 Months	1.25 - 1.75 hours
5 Months	1.5 - 2.25 hours
6 Months	2 - 2.5 hours
7 Months	2.25 - 2.75 hours
8 Months	2.25 - 3 hours
9 Months	2.5 - 3 hours
10 Months	2.5 - 3 hours
11 Months	3 - 3.5 hours
12 - 15 Months	3 - 3.5 hours
16 - 20 Months	4-5 hours
*2-3 years	5-6 hours

\*If still having one nap

# Support Consultations

## Full Support Package

\$349 Includes 2 weeks support

## Ask Me Anything Package

\$199 Includes Complete Sleep Guide

## Email Package

\$199 Includes 2 weeks support

## Trouble Shooting Consult

\$49

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