

Strategies for Sleep

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Remember that each family is unique and so is each member of the family.

Patterns do exist in families regarding sleep.

- Parents should discuss what sleep was like in their family?
 - Were there consistent bedtimes?
 - Who was responsible for bedtime?
 - What did you do around bed
 - Baths
 - Stories
 - Songs
 - Special toys or blankets
- What do you see working for your new family- what can you give on, what is important to maintain?

Teach patterns and ranges

- Use a sleep activity record during pregnancy starting at about 32 weeks of pregnancy
 - Mothers should expect about 7 hours of sleep at the end of pregnancy at night, 6 ½ during the early post partum period with 2-3 interludes.
 - New babies- 14 ½ hours is average with an 11-18 hour range and 2-3 interludes.
 - Can order sleep activity records through NCAST
- https://www.ncast.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=product.display&product_ID=52
 - Sing the same song and read the same book each night before bed or tell the same story while baby is in utero- baby remembers.
 - Continue that when born even while in the hospital.
 - Keep things dark and quiet at night- don't over stimulate or talk during night hours unless you prefer to be up then. Sometimes when families have older children 10-1am is the only time they have alone with the newest member.
 - During the day try to get 6 or more feedings in and do more stimulation around feedings.

Educate so families can make the best choice for their family.

- Discuss safe sleep- ALONE, on BACK, in the CRIB- nothing extra in the crib, air circulating, keep breastfeeding!
- Warn that couches, chairs, recliners and swings are more dangerous than a firm surface mattress.
- Safest place is in parent's room, in their own sleep surface, no toys or anything in the bed, on their back, and without extra bedding.

- Once they have turned over on their own you don't have to turn them back to back- but start with back to sleep.
- Remember that babies don't get into regular sleep rhythms and patterns until about 4-6 months about the same time they double their birth weight. Their brain needs time to have REM sleep (dreaming) and learn, consolidate memory and develop sleep cycles. This is only a little while in the grand scheme of things.
- Doing things the same as much as possible helps to establish trust and patterns of how it will be. So try to have a routine for bedtime.
- Mothers and infant who have another parent who is involved have the best sleep. Your role is essential and it is not to take over and feed, but to assist with the overall caregiving needed by the infant.

If a parent is stressed and overwhelmed- call for help!

- Lay baby down and listen to a song or walk around the house, and call someone.
- Have someone hold baby while you nap. Have a plan before birth for nap times.
- Devise a plan for family to be at the hospital 24/7 after they have slept at home so they can be awake and support new mom.
- Don't have visitors come to the hospital- if you do tell them to only come between 11-1 and 5-7pm so that they can hold the baby while you sleep, eat or shower, but otherwise learn and get to know your baby.
- If your baby is in the NIC have your partner be in charge of pump part cleaning and having it all ready for you!
- Figure out naps times for at home.
- Have help with household concerns-dishes, cleaning, meals.

For the future!

Remember just like with breastfeeding getting off to a good start with sleep, helps to have a solid foundation for it to go better later.

Babies need trust to develop. Studies have shown that cortisol /stress is higher in babies that are expected to cry it out. Crying is the baby's way to communicate needs and having needs met early on makes for a calmer baby in all aspects of their lives.

Have fun is most important and knowing that there are few rights and wrongs. But the only way you can spoil a baby is to not tend to them or care for them. Love and enjoy the baby!

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A new book will be coming out entitled #nobodytoldmeaboutthat regarding all things postpartum