

TIP SHEET

Response Based Sleep & Settling for Infants & Toddlers

Safe^{SSS}
Sleep
Space

From around seven to eight months babies begin to develop a concept of the existence of a world beyond their visual field, and at last, your baby begins to understand that when you are out of sight, you still exist (termed object permanence). The way this translates to sleep and settling is that when your baby sees you leave their bedroom, and understands that you will return, they begin to understand the idea of you leaving them and returning to them, without fearing that you have vanished forever.

Another developmental factor impacting on sleep at this age is mobility. As babies begin to master crawling, standing and even sitting, they can 'roam' around their cot while they sleep. Padding and bumpers post a SIDS risk, besides, babies quickly learn to avoid bumping into the cot railing from experience.

Some babies, from as early as eight months, can pull themselves up to a standing position, but have not yet mastered the art of sitting back down. Overnight this can be a problem. If this does occur and they cry out for assistance, just support them gently back down into a sleeping position with as little fuss as possible. This phase will pass as your baby masters sitting from a standing position but in the meantime they need your assistance. Gently guide them back to sitting or lying position but don't use force. If they remain standing, just leave them stand for 30 seconds or so and try again.

From eight months onwards your baby's internal control systems become more organised. They are more able to self-calm a little, and seek out comfort when needed. This is also when babies become selective about who they want to be with; strangers may cause great anxiety. Some babies even show a preference for one of their parents. If you are not the 'chosen one' especially for comfort, fear not, as this too will pass. In terms of sleep, babies from eight to twelve months become increasingly able to let others know when things are not going the way they planned, especially at sleep time.

The importance of preparing your baby for sleep when they become tired is critical, because if they become overtired, like everyone, they have greater difficulty drifting to sleep.

To help babies settle for sleep; have a predictable set of events they can anticipate. Time away from television, computer and all screens. Quiet time of 10 to 20 minutes helps active brains to calm and prepare for sleep. A book, maybe a massage or nursery rhymes and cuddles are all lovely quiet ways to wind down for sleep. Also, allow your baby to be involved in the preparation for bed; blow kisses good night to teddy, choose the book (keep options to one or two to select from), and say goodnight to the lights or the cat or the moon (in winter when it is dark early!).

Separation for sleep can be challenging, so once your baby is in the cot, stay until they are CALM, then walk away (to just outside the door). If they are not able to manage to stay calm, then simply return to them and offer more comforting when they cry out for you. Comfort them, once they are calm, leave the room again. This process helps your baby feel safe in knowing you will be there for them if they are distressed, but also allows them the opportunity to be calm without you... if they can, if not you reinforce it by returning to offer comforting.

When babies begin to anticipate your return they start to wait quietly for you to return and it is in this time they can drift to sleep knowing you will come if they are in need.

Physical safety is also critical at this mobile age, be sure they are in a sleeping bag or clothing that is not restricting their arms. Move all curtain cords or monitor cords that may be within reach and avoid overheating and exposure to smoke. See SIDS and KIDS website for details.

At Safe Sleep Space we offer a range of services; phone consultations, home visits and day stay programs. We also have resources; ROCKABUB app, 0-12 months sleep DVD, toddler sleep DVD and the Safe Sleep Space book & eBook, none of which involve controlled crying. For more information go to; www.safesleepspace.com.au or call us on 1300 775 337

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