



Sleep Tips for Expecting and New Parents

Getting enough sleep is important for your physical and mental health through pregnancy and the postpartum ... but it's often a challenge! Hormones, body changes and the needs of a newborn often leave parents exhausted and sleep deprived. Below are some general tips and best practices for getting a good night's sleep, as well as some of the issues and solutions specific to pregnancy and the postpartum period.

GENERAL SLEEP TIPS

Create routines so that your body and mind are ready for sleep.

- Limit caffeine you drink to the morning hours.
- Try not to work or look at screens (TV, phone, computer) in the evening hours.
- Engage in activities that help you unwind and increase calmness (listed below under relaxation techniques).

Reduce the amount of time you spend in bed not sleeping.

- If you are unable to fall asleep within about 30 minutes, or wake up and can't fall back to sleep, get out of bed and read or do some gentle stretches for 20-30 minutes and try again.
- Try to have a consistent wake-up time, even if you have not slept so well.
- Going to bed at the same time and waking up at the same time helps brain develop a routine and makes easier to maintain desired sleep schedule

Practice relaxation techniques to increase calmness in your body and mind. There are many relaxation techniques, here are a few that work for many people:

- [Deep breathing](#)
- [Progressive muscle relaxation](#)
- [Meditation and mindfulness](#)

Try not to let your worry about not sleeping increase your stress.

- Remember that the impact of pregnancy on sleep is time limited.
- Have realistic expectations about sleep - it may not be what you want it to be, but you can still get enough rest.
- Challenge some of the worries about not sleeping that can make it harder to sleep (ie "I'm never going to be able to sleep again!")

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SLEEP DURING PREGNANCY

Pregnancy is a period of changes in your body and your body's rhythms. Many feel exhausted and nauseated throughout the day. Others may have difficulty falling asleep, or staying asleep due to physical discomfort, fetal movement, acid reflux, and increased need to use the bathroom. In addition to the general sleep tips outlined above, here are some additional interventions that are helpful in pregnancy:

- Try a body pillow or multiple pillows to support your belly and parts of your body that are uncomfortable at night.
- Limit any food intake 2 hours before bedtime, and avoid foods that are likely to make acid reflux worse in the evenings (spicy foods, citrus, etc).
- Be well hydrated during the day so that you can limit fluids in the evening, to cut down on nighttime awakenings to use the bathroom.
- Prenatal yoga and gentle stretching can help promote relaxation as well as work out some of the muscle discomfort that often happens in pregnancy.
- Remember that even interrupted sleep, or just resting comfortably has benefits.

GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP POSTPARTUM

After the baby is born, getting enough sleep becomes more challenging for everyone. You may be recovering from labor, trying to figure out how to best manage feeding, and overwhelmed by the needs of a new baby. Sleep is critical for your health and wellbeing. In order to be healthy you need some rest. Getting several consecutive hours of sleep in addition to naps when the baby is sleeping are key to maintaining your wellbeing through this time.

- Partners, family, friends or other support people such as doulas or baby nurses can participate actively in supporting your sleep even if you are exclusively breastfeeding.
 - Your partner can bring the baby to you, help with burping and getting the baby back to sleep, change diapers at night.
- Partners or other supports may take over some nighttime feeds if you are pumping or using formula.
- It's ok to get help. It is not possible to do everything on your own, and including others can be very helpful.

WHEN TO TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT NOT SLEEPING

If you have tried these sleep tips and sleep is still a concern, please talk with your doctor. Your doctor can identify if there are problems such as restless legs or sleep apnea and they can discuss other options for improving sleep.