

## Sleep for parents

By Raising Children Network

It's the topic every new parent talks about: sleep. How much sleep are you getting? Are you getting enough sleep? How much is your baby sleeping?

- Getting enough sleep is a challenge in the early months of parenthood.
- Sleep helps you function, and lack of sleep can affect your health, your emotions and the way you cope.
- The key is to share the workload and take naps when you can – like when your baby sleeps.

If you've never had a period of bad sleeping before, you might get a shock at just how much lack of sleep can affect your life. New parents often say they didn't believe it would be as bad as it is.

It can take a while for babies to settle into a regular routine, and this makes getting the sleep and rest you need difficult. In the early weeks, getting any extra sleep might be an uphill battle.

### How much sleep do I need?

In general, adults need about seven to eight hours of sleep a night to feel properly rested, although this varies from five to 10 hours, depending on the individual. You may need more sleep if you:

- find it difficult to wake up in the morning, or feel drowsy all of the time
- are unable to concentrate
- feel moody, irritable, depressed or anxious
- are unintentionally having **micro-sleeps** during the day.

Just as your baby needs sleep to stay well, you need enough sleep to get on with and enjoy parenting. Proper rest helps you do so, and makes you feel happier and calmer. Also, your baby responds to how you feel, which means your baby will feel more contented too.

### Sleep tips for parents

Even though getting too little sleep is inevitable during the first few months of your baby's life, there are some things you can do to make up for this.

- It is possible to 'catch up' on missed sleep. You can make up for missed sleep during the week by sleeping more on the weekend. Catch up on rest whenever you get a chance.
- Even if you find it difficult to fall asleep during the day, lying down and resting can recharge

### did you know ?

- Severe sleep deprivation can lead to physical weariness, hallucinations and mood swings.
- With symptoms like hand-eye coordination problems, sleep deprivation can be similar to intoxication.

your batteries.

- It might be worth cutting out caffeine and other stimulants if you can. Although they make you feel better in the short term, in the long term they make resting and sleeping more difficult. They also affect the quality of your sleep.
- If you can, share the work with your partner (so you both feel as rested as possible), a family member or a friend. Taking turns or shifts for night-time duties can really make a difference. This might be harder for mothers who are breastfeeding. In this case, the key is to try to rest when your baby is resting.
- Some time out can work wonders if you're [stressed](#). If a friend, partner or relative can stay with your baby for a little while, taking a break may help you calm down. Even a walk around the block can dissolve some stress.

Rated  (4 ratings)

#### More to explore

▶ Newborn sleep

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#### References

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. (2003). *Brain Basics: Understanding Sleep*. Retrieved March 8th, 2006 from [http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/sleep\\_apnea/detail\\_sleep\\_apnea.htm#41553238](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/sleep_apnea/detail_sleep_apnea.htm#41553238)

## GLOSSARY

### microsleep

Brief, unintended sleeps, often with eyes open, which may occur when a person is tired but trying to stay awake, such as while driving a car or watching a computer screen; these can last from a few seconds to several minutes; the more sleep deprived a person is, the greater the chance that microsleeps will occur.