



Sleep Deprivation: How to Support Your Sleep with a Newborn



According to a [2021 survey](#) conducted by Formulate Health, around 36% of UK adults struggle to get to sleep on a weekly basis. The statistics show that women have more trouble falling asleep than men, while people aged 45-54 struggle the most when it comes to nodding off.

Although there are many factors that may stand in the way of slumber, such as anxiety, stress, sleep disturbances, bedroom environment, and lifestyle habits, perhaps the most universally understood is the impact of a newborn baby. The old trope of bleary-eyed parents clutching bottles and muslin cloths as they

fumble their way through night feeds is an all-too familiar sight, and the idea that new parents should wave goodbye to quality sleep has long been accepted as the status quo.

While it's true that sleep is very much compromised by the presence of newborn, the importance of getting enough cannot be underestimated. That's because sleep plays a huge part in maintaining healthy brain function, which in turn supports our physical and mental wellbeing and helps us fulfil our parental duties in the best way possible.

But the benefits don't stop there. Getting the recommended amount of sleep (which, according to The National Institute of Health, is [7 or more hours for 18-60 year olds](#)) can boost and support wellbeing in a variety of ways. This includes:

- **Improved mood** due to restored energy levels
- **Better cardiac health** as a result of the heart and vascular system being able to rest
- **Regulated blood sugar**, with a reduced risk of developing Type 2 diabetes
- **Strengthened mental function** due to the brain growing, restructuring, and forming new neural connections during sleep
- **Restored immune system**, with sleep producing the necessary hormones for tissue and cell repair
- **Maintaining healthy weight** due to the body naturally producing an appetite suppressor called leptin, while reducing production of the appetite stimulant ghrelin

However, new parents are much less likely to reap the benefits of all full night's sleep when dealing with the pressures of night feeds, breastfeeding, frequent waking, reflux, teething, nappy changes, and sleep regression. In fact, [research](#) has shown that men lose an average of 13 minutes of sleep per night after a baby is born, while women lose over an hour of sleep each night.

Because sleep is not expected to return to pre-pregnancy levels until a child is 6 years old, and with lack of sleep [shown](#) to play a key role in worsening the

symptoms of postpartum depression, it's vital to ensure you're doing everything you can to achieve a satisfactory amount of shut-eye. Without adequate sleep, the body becomes more prone to:

- Impaired memory
- Issues with concentration and problem solving
- Mood changes
- Weakened immunity
- High blood pressure
- Increased risk of accidents and injuries
- Low libido
- Poor balance
- And an increased risk of heart disease

The effects of sleep deprivation are particularly troublesome for new parents as they impact upon the mental fortitude that is required to successfully navigate this emotionally and physically demanding time. Personal resilience and relationship problems often go hand-in-hand with poor sleep, which is only exacerbated by the pressures of early parenthood. As such, we've created some simple tips to help get you counting sheep during those long and stressful nights.

Better Sleep for You and Your Baby

Take a 20 minute nap – It can be really difficult to keep your emotions in check when you're running on empty, but a quick 20 minute nap can do wonders for your overall wellbeing. In fact, the Mayo Clinic [reports](#) that napping can promote relaxation and reduce fatigue while boosting mood, alertness, and performance. Just be sure to keep your naps short and try not to doze off after 3pm, as doing so can make you feel groggy and may interfere with your ability to fall asleep at night.

Sleep when your baby sleeps – While it may be tempting to take advantage of your baby's naps by getting things done around the house, it's actually far more beneficial to use this time to catch up on some sleep yourself. Even if it's just a quick lie down, allowing yourself periods of rest throughout the day will help you keep a clear head while your baby is awake. And anyway, the dishes can wait.

Split shifts with your partner – If you're in a position to share the night shifts with a partner or family member, you'll soon enjoy the benefits. Doing so can help you experience longer periods of uninterrupted sleep, leaving you refreshed and more resilient to take on the day. If you or your partner is breastfeeding, you could also try expressing the milk via a pump so that the duty of night feeding doesn't fall solely on the mother.

Create a calm atmosphere – In order to encourage better sleep for you and your baby, use the early evenings as an opportunity to wind down and create a sense of calm. A soothing bath followed by a cuddly feed, a soft-spoken story, and a gentle infant massage will help both baby and parent to bridge the gap between a busy day and a tranquil night, while also establishing a solid bedtime routine that your baby will begin to associate with sleep.

Avoid co-sleeping – Co-sleeping is a controversial topic. While some families swear by keeping their baby close at night, the convenience and comfort of co-sleeping is not without its risks. [Research](#) has shown that the likelihood of babies succumbing to SIDS and suffocation increases when co-sleeping – especially if the baby is younger than 4 months old, was born prematurely, or had a low weight at birth. Sharing a bed with your baby can also impact your relationship, disrupt your sleep patterns, and encourage anxious attachment issues which can be hard to break.

Instead of co-sleeping, why not try a safer alternative such as moving your baby's cot into your bedroom? This will enable you to tend to your child's needs without the associated risks of bringing your baby into bed with you.

Don't be afraid to ask for help – Regardless of whether this is your first baby or your fifth, there's a reason they say '*It takes a village to raise a child.*' That's why there's absolutely no shame in reaching out for support if you need it. Whether

that's a friend or family member making meals, running errands, or doing the washing, those brief moments of respite really can make the world of difference. Try to become comfortable with asking for help when you need it and accepting help when it's offered, and you and your baby will soon feel the benefit.

Sleep certainly doesn't come easy during those early days and restless nights with a newborn, but we hope these tips have provided a good starting point from which you can build better habits to experience a more refreshed and resilient you.

Sources

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[10 Top Sleep Tips For New Parents - The Sleep Charity](#)

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