



Sleep and Settling

Virtual Parenting Hub - Online advice, support, and guidance empowering parents to work through challenges and find solutions.



Baby Sleep and Settling

One of the most common challenges after having a baby is adjusting to broken sleep. Sleep and settling issues can be stressful for parents which can impact on family functioning and relationships. The first few months result in frequent waking and feeding by your baby and toddlers may continue to wake at times during the night up until 3 years of age.

Sleep and Settling

- Babies rely on their parents to meet their physical and emotional needs. Babies need consistency and reliability from their parents when meeting their hunger, playful, emotional, and tired needs.
- Responding to your baby when they are crying or distressed creates a feeling of safety and security for your baby. When babies feel secure and have their needs met in a sensitive way, they can settle and sleep. Sleep is important for your baby as it promotes health, wellbeing, growth, and development.
- It can be helpful to reframe crying into communication. Babies and toddlers cry frequently as it is the way they communicate. They will cry if they are hungry, hot, cold, tired, bored, uncomfortable, frightened. It is the parent's role to respond to their child in a calm and sensitive manner. Try thinking about how your child feels from their point of view. Getting to know your child's needs and responding accordingly creates a strong parent-child attachment.
- Looking after your own emotional health is important. Lack of sleep can affect your daily functioning and your mood. Being tired can make it hard to give your child positive attention during the day. Ask for help from your partner, family, and friends.
- Prioritise a daytime rest/sleep for yourself, sleep when your baby sleeps.
- Incorporate self-care activities into your daily life, even if you leave the house for 15 minutes to go on a walk.



If you feel that your mental and emotional state is being affected by your lack of sleep, reach out for help, and contact **your Child, and family Health Nurse, Doctor, Beyond Blue, PANDA.**

Sleep Associations

- Sleep associations is a term used to describe what actions a baby or toddler learns to fall to sleep.
- At 3 months of age onwards you may want to start practicing independent sleep associations.
- When your child is transitioning through their sleep cycles of 30-50 minutes and stirs or wakes after one cycle, developing independent sleep associations helps your child go back to sleep, so they are not relying on you.
- Remember your baby is learning to link their sleep cycles from 3 months, so independent sleep associations may not always work. You will need to respond to your baby or child if they are distressed.



Independent Sleep Associations

Anything your child does on their own to sooth themselves to sleep or when the setting of the room remains the same, is known as a positive sleep association

- Darkened room
- Background white noise or music (left on repeat)
- Sleeping bag
- Sucking on fingers
- Dummy if your child can put it in their mouth independently
- Babbling
- Grizzling
- Child rocking
- Special toy-older child
- Humming



Dependent Sleep Associations

Dependent sleep associations are when your child relies on you to put them back to sleep when they stir or wake during the night or after one sleep cycle.

- Feeding to sleep
- Rocking to sleep
- Settling to sleep in a pram
- Dummy if child can not independently put it in their mouth
- Singing your child to sleep
- Driving your baby around in the car until they fall asleep



A graphic consisting of two overlapping pink shapes. The top shape is a rounded rectangle with a light pink gradient and a darker pink circle in the top-left corner. The bottom shape is a rounded rectangle with a darker pink gradient and a lighter pink circle in the bottom-right corner. The two shapes overlap in the center, creating a darker pink area.

Sleep Strategies

There are 5 sleep strategies that parents can use to help manage their babies and toddlers sleep, you can choose a strategy that suits you and your child.

1. Parental Presence

This method is where the parent stays in the baby's room for all sleeps. The parent has their own bed/mattress in the room. The aim is for the baby not to link sleep with the parent's attention.

The parent does not interact with the baby.

This method may take longer than other methods for change to occur.



Method

- Consistent calm bedtime routine
- Place your baby drowsy but awake in their cot
- Use your voice to sooth including shooshing and patting if needed
- Lay down on the mattress and pretend to sleep where your baby can see you
- When your baby wakes overnight, stay in your bed, make noises (moving, coughing), so your baby knows you are there
- If your baby is upset, offer a soft voice, shooshing, patting through the cot
- If your baby is not calming, give a cuddle until calm
- Repeat the process
- Use this process for all sleeps
- Follow this process for 7 nights
- Return to your own bed when your baby is sleeping through the night

2. Responsive Settling

This method is used for babies 6-12 months as they can tolerate short periods of separation with periods of comforting. Responsive settling takes the individual baby's needs into account. Parents learn their baby's tired and distress cues and comfort them as needed. This method can take up to 3 days to 3 weeks.



Method

- Consistent calm bedtime routine
- Place your baby drowsy but awake in their cot
- If your baby does not settle, use your voice to sooth including shooshing, pat your baby through the cot gently until your baby is calm
- Parent says goodnight and leaves the room
- Parent stays outside the room to give the baby time to self sooth and settle
- If your baby does not settle, wait for the cries to elevate, and go back into the room and offer minimal stimulation
- Repeat, use your voice to calm, shooshing and pat your baby though the cot
- When your baby calms and is relaxed, leave the room
- Repeat the above steps
- If the parent or baby feels overwhelmed, pick your baby up and cuddle until calm, then place your baby back into the cot
- You can try this method at another sleep time if you are feeling stressed

3. Camping Out

This method is where the parent gradually moves away from the child but does not sleep in the same room. This strategy may take up to 1-3 weeks.



Method

- Consistent calm bedtime routine
- Place your child in the cot drowsy but awake
- If your child does not settle, use your voice to sooth including shooshing
- Pat your child gently through the cot
- Parent leaves the room when the child is asleep
- When your child is used to going to sleep without being touched, the parent moves their chair a short distance away from the cot and sits on the chair until the child falls asleep
- Parent keeps moving the chair further away from the cot towards the door, until your child eventually learns to go to sleep without the parent in the room.
- When your child wakes overnight, return to your chair where you left off, and sit on the chair until your child falls asleep.

4. Controlled Comforting

This method is where the parent leaves the room for a set amount of time, rather than responding to their child's cues. The parent comforts their child for short periods of time, then leaves the room for timed periods.



Method

- Consistent calm bedtime routine
- Place your child into their cot drowsy but awake, leave the room
- If your child does not settle, wait 2 minutes before entering the room
- Go into your child's room, use your voice to sooth including shooshing, pat your child through the cot
- Leave the room for 4 minutes, if your child has not settled, go back in, and use your voice and patting
- Leave the room and wait 6 minutes, if your child has not settled, go back in, and use your voice and patting
- Leave the room and wait 8 minutes, if your child has not settled, go back in, and use your voice and patting
- Leave the room and wait 10 minutes, if your child has not settled, go back in, and use your voice and patting
- If your child is still unsettled, repeat entire process

5. Bedtime Fading

This method is where the parent pushes out the child's bedtime until the child is ready for sleep. This method can be used for 2-3-year olds and is designed to improve compliance at bedtime and the child falling to sleep within 15 minutes.



Method

- Record the time your child goes to bed each evening for a week
- Note the latest time and set this as bedtime
- Keep your child awake with calm quiet activities until bedtime arrives
- If your child falls asleep within 15 minutes, use this time for sleep for one more night
- If your child takes more than 15 minutes to go to sleep, extend the bedtime out 30 minutes the following night, bedtime will be later
- When your child has 2 nights of successful sleep at bedtime, falling asleep within 15 minutes. Bring the bedtime forward 15 minutes
- Continue this process by bringing the bedtime forward 15 minutes every second night if your child is falling asleep within 15 minutes
- Wake your child at the same time every morning

Swaddle/Wrapping your Baby

Swaddling your baby is a great settling technique to help your baby go to sleep, stay asleep and reduce crying time. Swaddling your baby reduces their arms flying about with the startle reflex, helping them settle to sleep. Swaddling your baby may help to keep your baby in a stable position lying on their back.

Key Points when Swaddling your Baby

- Your baby's wrap needs to be below the neck, so it does not cover their face
- Use a lightweight cotton or muslin wrap as bunny rugs and blankets may cause over heating
- The wrap needs to be firm but not too tight
- Do not wrap your baby's legs together as this may cause abnormal hip development
- Do not over dress your baby under the wrap, which may cause overheating. A singlet and nappy in the warm weather and a singlet and grow suit in the cooler weather
- Stop swaddling/wrapping your baby when are rolling or by the age of 3-4 months for safety
- Place your baby in an arms free sleeping bag by the age of 3-4 months
- Do not wrap your baby when they are in a sleeping bag
- Do not wrap your baby if they are sharing a sleep space with another person





Transitioning from a Cot to a Bed

Transitioning from a Cot to a Bed

- Your child can move from their cot to a bed from the ages of 2-3 ½
- If your child is climbing out of their cot you will need to move them into a bed for safety
- If you are having another baby, it may be time to move your child into a bed
- Your child needs to be physically able to get in and out of a bed
- Make sure the room is safe, no dangling cords, heaters, electric blankets, open power points, stairs and windows are not accessible
- Ensure bookshelves, TV's, draws cannot be tipped over
- Ensure the bed is not too high due to risk of falling
- Only use a pillow for children 2 years old and over
- Sleeping bags can be a risk for falls once in a bed, so try pyjamas or a onesie



Strategies to Help

- Praise your child, tell them you are proud of them with moving into a bed
- Involve your child in setting up the new bed, go shopping for bedding together, make it fun
- Your child might need to make a gradual transition, start with the daytime sleep
- Have some quiet time before bed
- Adopt a consistent bedtime routine
- Encourage your child to climb into bed by themselves and pull the covers up over them
- Let your child take a blanket from the old cot if this helps
- Say good night and tell your child what you expect including “It’s time to go to sleep, see you in the morning”
- Try a reward chart to help with the new routine

You can use any of the sleep **strategies 1-5** for this age group

Period of Purple Crying

The period of Purple Crying is the time in a baby's life where they are experiencing normal development. During this phase, babies can cry for long periods of time and resist soothing. Parents may often think that there is something wrong with their baby, however the crying is related to communication and development. The period of Purple Crying can begin around 2 weeks of age and continue until 3-4 months of age

The letters in **PURPLE** stand for the different characteristics of what the baby is experiencing in this phase

P

Peak of crying, your baby's crying may increase and peak at week. Crying reduces at 3-4 months of age

U

Unexpected, your baby's crying can come and go, you do not know why

R

Resist soothing, your baby may not stop crying with your usual settling techniques

P

Pain like face, your baby may have this face, but they are not in pain

L

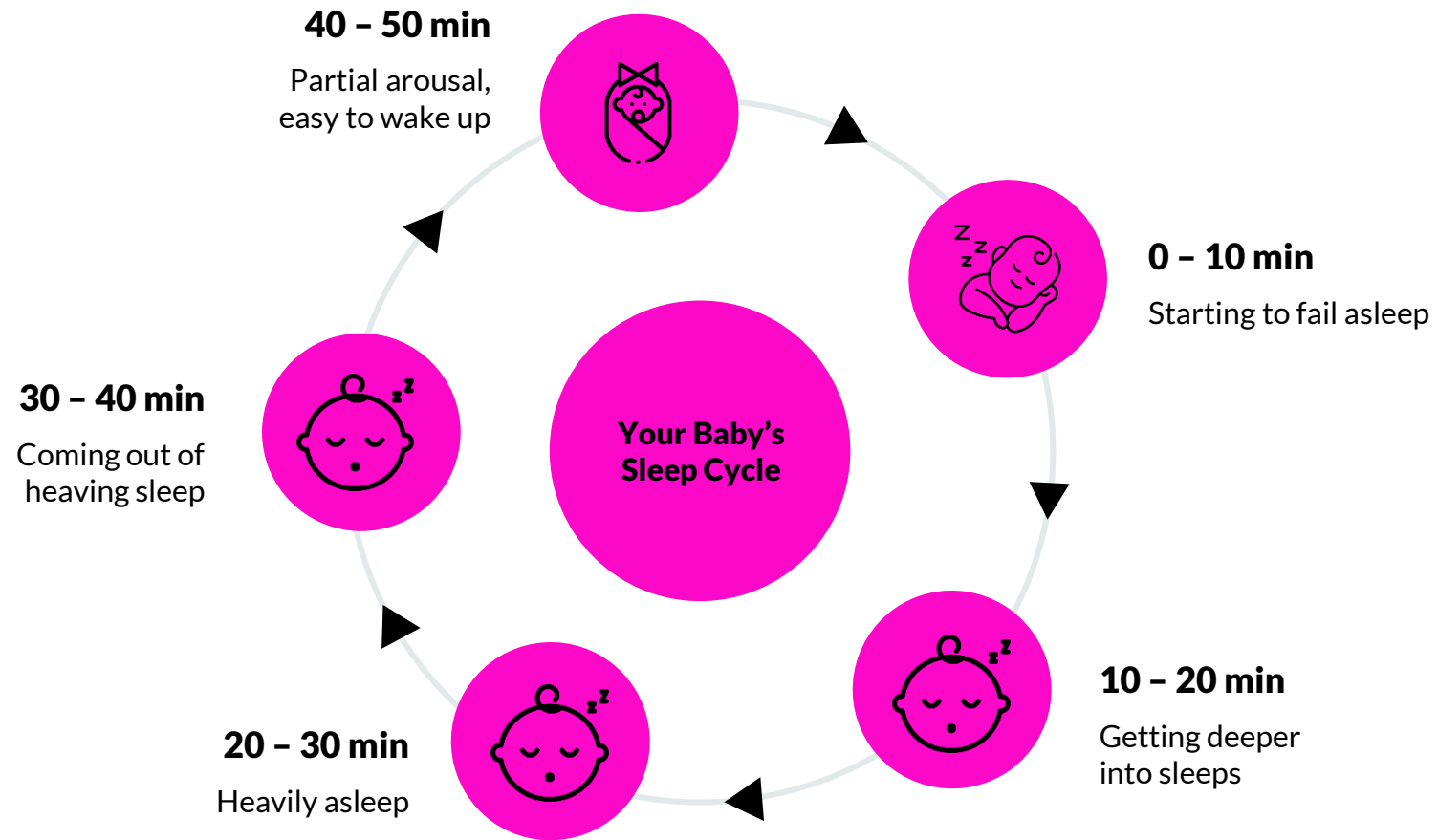
Crying can be long lasting up to 5-6 hours in a 24-hour period

E

Your baby may cry more in the late afternoons or evenings

Baby's Sleep Cycle

In the first three months, erratic feeding and sleeping behaviors are common as infants are in a normal state of adjusting. The challenge of parents is to help the infants adjust to the environment whilst they are also learning to identify and respond sensitively to the infant's cues. Before three months of age, infants have their nights and days confused, hence why it is difficult to establish sleeping patterns.



Baby's Sleep Cycle

By the age of 4 months

The 24-hour internal clock that controls the sleep and wake cycle is more developed. The challenge for parents is to support the infant in establishing age-appropriate sleep associations and routines that incorporate sleep, play and feed times.

By the age of 6 months

Sleep cycles have generally lengthened; most infants will stir and resettle without intervention. The child is strongly influenced by the environment and daily routines. Consistent feed, play and sleep routines incorporating a wind-down period will assist the infant in developing routines, sleep patterns and associations.

Following are some tips to follow to change your baby's sleep cycle:

- The first step to help your baby sleep through the night is to teach your baby how to self-settle at the beginning of the night.
- You need to put your baby in the cot awake; this gives her/him the opportunity to self-settle. Your baby will need to learn to fall asleep without your help.
- Usually, when your baby has learned to fall asleep by herself/himself at the start of the night, she/he can get back to sleep without your help during the night.
- It takes 3-14 days to change a baby's sleep pattern, just as it takes a few days for adults to adjust when sleep patterns are changed.
- After six months of age, babies do not need to be fed during the night. Routines can be changed so that your baby has enough milk during the night.
- You can change your baby's sleep pattern but remember – they are likely to protest for the first few nights until they get used to the change.



Sleep and Settling

0-3 Months

- Babies in this age group do not have a regular sleep pattern
- There is no regular sleep routine
- Short irregular bursts of sleep are normal, every 2-3 hours over a 24-hour period
- Your baby will wake regularly to feed as they have small stomachs
- The range of sleep is 12-16 hours per 24-hour period
- Babies may sleep from 20 minutes to 3 or 4 hours
- Your baby does not know day from night
- Babies circadian rhythm is not activated until 3-4 months of age
- Babies only have small amounts of melatonin which is not enough to establish regular night sleep routines
- Your baby may get tired after 1-1 ½ hours, sometimes longer
- When your baby is asleep, they will go through sleep cycles, active and quiet cycles, lasting about 30-40 minutes

- During the active cycle you may notice your baby's eyes flickering or making grunting noises
- When your baby finishes a sleep cycle, they might cry or wake up, you may need to help your baby link their sleep cycle by helping them go back to sleep
- If your baby becomes over tired, it can be harder to settle them back to sleep
- Between 4-8 weeks of age, you might notice that your baby is crying more and sometimes harder to settle, this is due to your baby's brain development
- Your baby's crying generally peaks at around 8 weeks
- You might notice that your baby is more unsettled and crying in the evenings



Strategies to help settle your Baby

- Make sure your baby has fed, nappy changed, not too hot/cold
- You need to be flexible and “go with the flow” in the early months, remember there is no sleep routines
- There is no such thing as spoiling your baby, you will need to respond to your baby when they are crying so they feel safe
- You should not let your baby “cry it out”, responding to your baby’s needs helps a positive brain development
- You will need to help your baby to settle and link their sleep cycles
- Rocking and cuddling your baby to sleep is normal at this age
- It is normal to breast feed your baby to sleep at this age
- Try a swaddle or a sleeping bag to settle
- Babies will suck for soothing, try a dummy or allow your baby to suck on their hand
- Hold your baby in an upright position close to your chest, rock, pat, walk or sing



Strategies to help settle your Baby (Cont.)

- Put your baby in the pram and walk up and down the hallway or go for a walk during the day
- Try a deep warm bath and massage
- Try some white noise or gentle music
- You may need to try several options of your settling techniques
- Get your partner or a family member to help when you are feeling tired or overwhelmed

Sleep and Settling

3-7 months

- Your baby has become more awake and alert
- Your baby may sleep between 10-18 hours in a 24-hour period
- As the frequent feeds reduce, babies may have longer blocks of sleep
- The circadian rhythm has activated, and the sleep-wake cycles may show a pattern
- Your baby may show cycles of 1 ½-2 hours awake and asleep
- Your baby can learn to link their sleep cycles with your help
- Your baby can learn to self sooth, give them the opportunity to learn by slowing down your response, but sooth your baby if they are distressed
- Babies will have 3-day time sleeps and need awake times in between their sleeps
- You can start a regular routine of **Feed/Play/Sleep**. During the day when your baby wakes you feed, then play, watch for the tired signs, and then sleep. Overnight you just feed and sleep



Strategies to help Settle your Baby

- Stop swaddling your baby at this age, you may try a hands-free sleeping bag
- Allow your baby to have independent (positive) sleep associations including, sucking on fingers, grizzling, rocking themselves, babbling, white noise music. Try not to feed or rock your baby to sleep, so your baby does not associate these behaviours with sleep.
- Adopt a regular sleep routine for every sleep
- Babies learn through consistent routines, so be as consistent as you can for every sleep
- Place your baby in a quiet darkened room
- Place your baby in the cot drowsy but awake, try and settle your baby in the cot for every sleep.
- Give your baby some time to settle, avoid picking your baby up as soon as they grizzle, babies can grizzle when they are self-soothing. Pick your baby up if they are distressed and comfort them



- Place your hands gently on your baby and talk softly to them, make some shooshing sounds
- Try some gentle rhythmic patting
- Try the use of a dummy, your baby will suck for soothing.
- If your baby wakes after one sleep cycle, try resettling them for 15 minutes, you are helping them learn to link their sleep cycles
- Your baby may not always settle in their cot, sometimes the routine may not work. Remember your baby is learning, it is very reasonable to rock or feed your baby to sleep if you need to.
- Try a rollover/dream feed about 10-11pm. Your baby might have a longer block of sleep after this feed
- If your baby wakes overnight, you will need to feed them

Sleep and Settling

8-12 Months

- Babies sleep patterns become more developed
- Babies respond well to consistent routines
- Provide a calm consistent bedtime routine
- Babies will have less sleep during the day and longer sleeps overnight
- Circadian rhythms have established, and your baby knows day from night
- Sleep cycles are between 40-60 minutes
- Babies sleep between 10-14 hours per 24-hour period
- Babies are learning to link their sleep cycles
- Babies are getting better at self-soothing
- Your baby will reduce their day sleeps to two
- You do not need to feed your baby overnight
- Continue with the feed/play/sleep routine



Strategies to help Settle your Baby

- Adopt a regular consistent bedtime routine
- Encourage independent (positive) sleep associations
- Continue the rollover/dream feed between 10-11pm if suits or phase it out
- During the day if your baby wakes before 1-hour, resettle for 15-30 minutes. If your baby is not resettling, pick your baby up, give a cuddle and a drink, then watch for tired signs and settle again
- Place your baby in a quiet dark room
- Overnight if your baby wakes, give your baby some time to self-settle.
- If your baby is upset go into the room, respond by giving your baby sleep cues, shooshing, do not feed, try patting through the cot and encourage your baby to calm, then leave the room. If your baby does not self-settle and begins crying again, repeat the process.

If you are having trouble settling your baby, try one of the settling strategies that suits you and your baby. You can use any of the 1-4 strategies with this age group.

Sleep and Settling

1-2 Years

- Make sure your baby has fed, nappy changed, not too hot/cold
- You need to be flexible and “go with the flow” in the early months, remember there is no sleep routines
- There is no such thing as spoiling your baby, you will need to respond to your baby when they are crying so they feel safe
- You should not let your baby “cry it out”, responding to your baby’s needs helps a positive brain development
- You will need to help your baby to settle and link their sleep cycles
- Rocking and cuddling your baby to sleep is normal at this age
- It is normal to breast feed your baby to sleep at this age
- Try a swaddle or a sleeping bag to settle
- Babies will suck for soothing, try a dummy or allow your baby to suck on their hand
- Hold your baby in an upright position close to your chest, rock, pat, walk or sing



Strategies to help Settle your Baby

- It may take 3 days to 3 weeks to change your toddler's behaviour
- Adopt a calm, consistent and persistent approach
- Recognise the different cries, grizzle, call outs from distress crying
- Use independent sleep associations, phase out dependent sleep associations
- Recognise tired signs
- Place your toddler in a quiet dark room
- Have a night-time routine and wind down time including dinner, bath, milk feed, clean teeth, story, cuddle, cot, sleep
- If your toddler wakes overnight resettle, you do not need to feed them

You can use any of the **sleep strategies 1-4** with this age group

Sleep and Settling

2-3 Years

- In this age group, children are starting to assert their independence
- Your child can do more for themselves
- When your child feels safe, secure and has predictable routines, it will enhance their ability to learn, play and sleep
- Common sleep issues for this age group include frequent night waking, early morning waking, refusing to go to bed, wanting to sleep in the parent's bed or taking more than 30 minutes to go sleep
- Sleep cycles are 60 minutes
- 80 percent of 2-year old's have one day time sleep
- 50 percent of 3-year old's have one daytime sleep
- Your child's sleep is influenced by their temperament, family relationships, environment, development and daily patterns
- Your child may experience nightmares and separation anxiety
- Your child will be transitioning to a toddler bed
- If your child is climbing out of the cot, it is time to transition to a toddler bed for safety
- Your child can learn self-regulating behaviours with the help of their parents



Strategies to help Settle your Baby

- It may take 3 days to 3 weeks to change your child's behavior
- Adopt a calm, consistent, persistent approach
- Recognise tired signs
- Place your child in a quiet darkened room
- Have a wind down, quiet time
- Adopt a bedtime routine
- Give your child two choices (books, songs) allowing them to feel they have some control

You can use any of the **sleep strategies 1-5** with this age group



**Suggested Daily Guide for
8-10 Months**

Suggested Daily Guide for 8-10 Months

6.30-7am	Wake and breast/formula feed
7.30am	Solid food breakfast/cooled boiled water
8.30/8.45am	Morning tea /Playtime
9.30am	Sleep
11- 11.30am	Wake/Solid food lunch/cooled boiled water
12pm	Breast/formula feed Playtime
1.30-2pm	Sleep 2-2 1/2 hours
3.30-4pm	Wake and afternoon tea
4.30pm	Breast/formula feed Playtime
5.30pm	Solid food dinner/cooled boiled water
6pm	Bath
6.30pm	Story and bedtime routine/cuddles
6.45pm	Breast/formula feed
7pm	Sleep



**Suggested Daily Routine
for 10-12 Months**

Suggested Daily Routine for 10-12 Months

6.30-7am	Wake and breast/formula feed
7.30am	Solid food breakfast/cooled boiled water
8.30/8.45am	Morning tea /Playtime
9.30am	Sleep
11- 11.30am	Wake/Solid food lunch/cooled boiled water
12pm	Breast/formula feed Playtime
1.30-2pm	Sleep 2-2 1/2 hours
3.30-4pm	Wake and afternoon tea
4.30pm	Playtime/cooled boiled water
5.30pm	Solid food dinner/cooled boiled water
6pm	Bath
6.30pm	Story and bedtime routine/cuddles
6.45pm	Breast/formula feed
7pm	Sleep

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