



# CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

## Sleep Problems and Nighttime Feedings: After Your Child's Visit

### Your Kaiser Permanente Care Instructions

If your baby is more than 4 months old and is waking to feed more than twice a night, it may be time for a change. You can help your baby—and yourself—sleep better and longer. The goal is to help your baby learn self-comfort so that you are not your baby's only source of comfort at night.

During the newborn phase, your baby needs to eat every 1 to 3 hours. Feeding your baby on demand leaves you little time to sleep between nighttime feedings, but it only lasts a few weeks. You can expect your baby to start feeding less often at night than during the day.

After 2 months of age, babies settle into a regular feeding schedule. A breast-fed baby nurses about every 3 to 5 hours. A bottle-fed baby will eat less often than that, because formula takes longer to digest than breast milk does. So by 4 months, your baby may be able to go 5 or more hours at night between feedings.

Adding cereal to a bottle will not make a baby sleep through the night. Babies do not need solid foods until they are about 6 months old. Check with your health professional to see when your baby is ready for solid food.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your child's treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if your child is having problems. It's also a good idea to know your child's test results and keep a list of the medicines your child takes.

## How can you care for your child at home?

### Helping your baby be a better sleeper

- Set a regular schedule of naps and bedtime. Your baby will settle into nap times at certain times of the day. Put your baby down for a nap as soon as he or she acts sleepy. Your baby may rub his or her eyes when sleepy. If your baby gets too tired, it may be hard for him or her to get to sleep. If your baby misses a nap, try to keep him or her awake until the next nap time.
- At night, set up a soothing routine. Give your baby a bath, sing lullabies, read a book, or tell a story. These activities can relax your baby. They also signal that it is time to sleep. Do not get your baby excited with active play right before sleep.
- Put your baby down for sleep in a quiet, darkened room. Keep the room slightly cool so your baby does not get overheated.
- Do not rock your baby to sleep. Your baby will learn that you are needed to help him or her sleep. Instead, just rock your baby for a short time. Then lay your baby down while he or she is drowsy but still awake.
- Talk to your doctor about whether to let your baby "cry it out." You can try letting your baby cry for 5 minutes when you first put him or her to bed, and then go into the room. Pat your baby and say comforting words, but do not pick up your baby. You may want to slowly increase the time between visits to your baby's room until he or she falls asleep. This may help your baby learn to fall asleep without you.
- During the second half of the first year, expect that things like a growth spurt, a change in routine, or teething can change your baby's sleep pattern. To help your baby sleep as well as possible, try to follow your usual nap and bedtime routine.
- Remember to put your baby down to sleep on his or her back. This decreases the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

### Getting your baby back to sleep

- If your baby cries at night, do not pick him or her up right away. Some babies cry out in their sleep and then stop without ever waking. Or your baby may wake up and go back to sleep on his or her own. If your baby cries for more than 1 to 2 minutes, briefly comfort him or her with soothing words and a gentle touch. Do not turn on the light or pick up your baby.
- If your baby does not settle down, check to see whether he or she is hungry or needs a diaper change. Feed or change your baby quietly. Keep the light low. Do not play with or sing to your baby. Put him or her back in the crib after feeding or changing.

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- If your baby is not acting hungry during a nighttime feeding, settle your baby down to sleep as quickly as possible.
- Try to stay calm. Young children are very sensitive to a parent's frustration and fatigue. Try to sleep when your baby does, even during the day if you can, so you will have more energy for those times when your baby is fussy at night.
- Be consistent with your baby from night to night. If you change your plan for how to handle nighttime crying, make sure that you and your partner agree on it before you go to bed.

## When should you call for help?

Watch closely for changes in your child's health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your baby is fussy and is not eating well or not acting the way you think he or she should.
- Your baby's sleep or feeding pattern suddenly changes.
- You think your baby is sick.
- You have questions about nighttime feedings.

## Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter **M350** in the search box to learn more about "**Sleep Problems and Nighttime Feedings: After Your Child's Visit.**"

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