**SPG GUIDE TO INFANT SLEEP**

**Why is sleep important?**

Sleep is necessary for proper growth and development, a healthy immune system, attention and learning, and even for decreasing the risk of being overweight. It is easier to prevent sleep problems than it is to treat them later. Your goal should be to teach your baby to put himself or herself to sleep. For most babies, this requires consistency, some planning, and trust that both you and your baby CAN do this!

**SLEEP SAFETY:**

**ALWAYS** place babies to sleep on their backs. “Tummy time” should only be done when both you and your baby are awake, and you are together.

**AVOID** blankets, pillows, stuffed animals, soft bedding, or bumpers in the crib. Babies should sleep on a firm mattress covered by a fitted sheet, with nothing else in the crib.

**REMOVE** pacifier straps and jewelry from the baby’s neck. Make sure there are no drawstrings on baby’s clothing, and that there are no cords (e.g., from window blinds) in or near the baby’s crib.

**NEVER** allow a baby to sleep on a couch or in a bed. If you are tired, the safest place for your baby is in his/her crib or bassinette.

**NEWBORNS:**

**What to expect:**

Newborns won’t sleep through the night. During the first month, they will usually wake to feed every 2-4 hours, which means you will be up every 2-4 hours, too.

After 1 month, your baby may be able to sleep a little longer, but most babies still need to feed frequently.

Many newborns have their days and nights “mixed up”; they may want to sleep a lot during the day and then party all night!

**What you can do:**

**Do:**

Know that this is a challenging time, but that it won’t last forever.

Try to feed your baby frequently during the day.

Sleep when the baby sleeps. This is a tough adjustment for many new parents. It may mean letting the dishes and laundry pile up a little more than you’d like, but your physical and emotional well-being are more important than a spotless house at this point!

**Don’t:**

Don’t allow a newborn to sleep more than 4 hours between feeds.

Don’t keep daytime too quiet. You want to teach the baby that daytime is active, alert time, and night is the time to sleep. Have the lights on and use sound during the day to mark this as “awake” time, and keep the nighttime boring, with lower lighting and less noise.

**OLDER INFANTS:**

**What to expect:**

By 2-3 months, most babies can sleep for 5-6 hours at a time. They will still need to eat once or twice at night

By 4 months (usually by 11 pounds), babies can sleep 7-8 hours at a stretch.

By 5-6 months, babies can sleep a solid 8 hours without feeding!

All children partially wake up at the end of each sleep cycle. It normally happens about every 90 minutes. Good sleepers will be able to self-soothe and go back to sleep.

**What you can do:**

**Do:**

Start a bedtime routine, so your baby learns what to expect. A typical routine may include a bath, change into pajamas, and then a story or lullaby.

Continue to feed regularly during the day.

Try to feed the baby one last time before you go to sleep at night.

Remove the breast or bottle before the baby falls asleep.

Place your baby in the crib when drowsy, but awake. Babies who are held or fed until they fall asleep will think they “need” to be held or fed every time they wake up during the night. Babies who falls asleep on their own at the beginning of the night will be able to self-soothe back to sleep.

Learn to recognize your baby’s sleepy signals: rubbing eyes; getting quieter or less interested in interacting; getting a little bit fussier. Take advantage of these sleepy times; your baby is more likely to fall asleep at this stage than if over-tired.

**Don’t:**

Don’t feed, hold, or rock until asleep.

Don’t pick up your baby every time he/she stirs or fusses a little. Give the baby a chance to settle.

Don’t rush to fee if your baby wakes in the middle of the night. Try to soothe first with a soft voice or gentle touch.

Don’t let your baby sleep in your bed.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

**How much sleep does my child need?**

Every child is an individual, and sleep needs may vary slightly. A general guideline for how much sleep children require:

Sleep Requirements by Age (including naps):

0-3 months 14-18 hours

4-12 months 12-16 hours

\*1-2 years 11-14 hours

**When will my child stop napping?**Most children will give up their 2nd nap between 1 and 2 years. They usually stop napping altogether between 2 and 6 years.

**When should my child move from a crib to a bed?**

Children typically transition from the crib to a bed between 1.5 and 3.5 years. If a new baby is on the way, try to make the transition a few months before or after the new baby arrives, so your older child doesn’t feel as if his sibling is “stealing” his crib.

**My child and I never followed any of these tips. Is it too late to start?**

While it is best to start good sleep habits when your baby is very young, it is not hopeless! It may take time and effort to fix sleep problems, but it can be done. If you are not sure what to do, ask your child’s provider for some tips at their next check-up.