

Understanding Your Baby Infant Behavior





Understanding Your Baby

Infant Behavior

- ◆ Moms and babies **learn** to communicate with each other.
- ◆ At first, it may be hard to understand what your baby is trying to tell you. But it doesn't take long for you and your baby to develop your own **special language**.
- ◆ Babies actually have ways **other than crying** to tell parents what they need. Babies use their **bodies and noises** to tell us what they need – We call these **'cues.'**
- ◆ At first, babies can't tell us very much. They can just tell us **if they are comfortable** and want to be near us or play with us. **Or if they are uncomfortable** and need something to be different. Here is an example of each:



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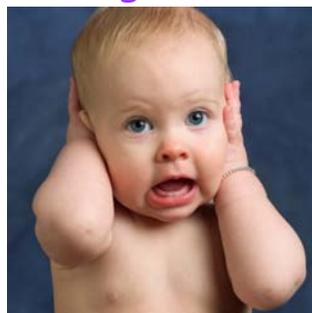
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"I want to be near you"



Baby has a relaxed, smiling face, and is looking at you with wide open eyes.

"I need a break or something different"



Baby has stiff fingers and body and is arching his back and pushing away.

"You can prevent me from crying if you listen to my cues!"

"I'm Hungry!"

Hungry babies will do **many things** to tell you they are hungry. **Sometimes they cry, but not always.** If babies are crying, but not doing **all of the other things** that mean they are hungry, you should probably **look for something else** to make the baby feel more comfortable.



- ◆ Bring their hands to their face
- ◆ Clench their hands
- ◆ Flex their arms & legs

- ◆ Root
- ◆ Make sucking motions & noises

When babies are hungry they:

- Bring their hands to their mouths
- Suck on things
- Make tight fists over their tummies
- Are awake and alert

Babies cry for many reasons other than hunger. They could be:

- ◆ Too hot or cold
- ◆ Lonely or tired
- ◆ Upset by too much noise or too bright of lights
- ◆ Uncomfortable with a wet or dirty diaper, clothes too tight, etc.

Crying won't always mean your baby is hungry. Babies are hard to understand at first, but it gets easier!

"I Will Wake Up if I Need Your Help."

It can also be hard to understand **why babies wake up a lot.** Your baby's sleep patterns (sleeping or waking up) are a behavior (one of the ways they react to what's going on around them). Let's talk a little more about **how infants sleep** and **why it can be hard on new parents.**



Sleep Like a Baby

Babies will wake up at night and try to tell parents that **they need something**. That can be **hard on parents**. But it only lasts a short time! By about 4 months old, your baby will wake up a lot less.



From what you've heard or seen, how many times would you guess that your newborn baby will wake up at night during the first month? How about by 2 months old? Or 6 months old?

There are a lot of ideas about how many times babies wake up at night. Every baby is different but research shows that most babies wake up:

3-4 times per night by 1 month old

2-3 times per night by 2 months old

0-1 time per night by 6 months old



So, yes, babies do wake up at night, but maybe not as much as moms might think. It might feel like your baby wakes up a lot more than this, especially when you are tired and waking up in the middle of the night. If your baby wakes up a lot more than this on a regular basis, talk to someone at WIC. We are here to help!

Why Babies Wake-up

Parents might think that babies wake up **only if they are hungry**. Sometimes, they do wake up to eat but there are **many reasons why babies wake up**. Babies need to wake up sometimes because they are hot or cold, are uncomfortable, or even because they need to breathe. In other words, your baby will wake up because he needs you!



A True Sleepy Story

Tired Signs:

Yawning
Getting fussy
Eyes tired
Eyes glazed



Once upon a time...in a city not far from here...a new mom and her 2-month-old baby are settling down for bed.

This all started about 15 minutes ago when Jennifer (a new mom) notices Lily (her 2-month-old baby) yawning and getting fussy. Her eyes were tired and glazed.

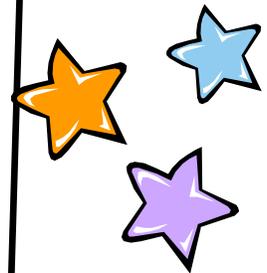
Jennifer says: "Uh oh! You are sure showing me signs that you are tired. Let's get ready for bed."

How did she know Lily was tired? Jennifer learned these "tired signs" from a WIC class she went to during her pregnancy.

So, she changes Lily into her pajamas, changes her diaper, gets her all comfortable and puts Lily down to sleep.

Jennifer learned early that she can't just put Lily down right after she falls asleep. She has to wait about 20 minutes and look for signs of *Quiet* or *Deep sleep* before putting Lily down. If she doesn't, Lily could wake up again as soon as she puts her down. Jennifer knows this because she's had many times where she put Lily down sooner because she herself was so tired only to have Lily wake right up when her little body touched the bed.

Then, already worn-out Jennifer would have to start the whole bedtime process over again. Talk about frustrating!



As Lily gets older, she will wake up less and less...



So Jennifer waits about 20 minutes and tests Lily for signs of deep sleep. These signs are: *little or no body movement, hard to wake, sucking movements with mouth, and limp arms and legs.*

Lily has most of these signs so her mom lays her down in her bed. Luckily, as Lily gets older, bedtime will be much easier. Jennifer will not have to wait as long to put Lily down to sleep. She will fall asleep more easily and quickly!

Lily sleeps very deeply for awhile. Then her eyes start fluttering and she smiles a sweet little smile. Lily is now in a light sleep called *Active sleep*, where she dreams. Jennifer knows dreaming is healthy. Lily's brain is growing and developing as she dreams.

When babies are in active sleep, they also wake up more easily. Lily notices that her diaper is very wet and is bothering her. Jennifer hears Lily stir and quickly checks on her.

★ "Hi my little angel, what's wrong?" she asks. So many things to check: Is Lily cold or hot? Hungry or lonely? Is her diaper wet?

★ "Oh wow, your diaper is very wet. Sorry sweet baby!" Jennifer quickly changes Lily's diaper so as not to completely wake her up.

She puts Lily back to sleep, rocking her about 20 minutes to make sure she is in quiet or deep sleep before putting her down.

★ Mom and baby sleep well (*deeply and quietly*) for awhile. Then, as Lily enters another phase of active or light sleep, she awakens quickly. She wakes up because her nose is stuffy and she is having a hard time breathing.

★ Jennifer hears her baby waking, but is *so tired* that she waits a bit, but then Lily starts to cry...



Luckily, Lily woke up to let her mom know something was wrong!



So Jennifer goes to her baby. While soothing her, she notices that she is having a hard time breathing through her nose. She takes care of this and then Lily goes back to sleep. Luckily, Lily woke up to let her mom know something was wrong! Otherwise, how would she have known?

The night continues with Lily waking up for a feeding when she is hungry and then going back to sleep.

Jennifer has learned that it's normal for babies this age to wake up 2-3 times per night. So, she's not surprised when Lily wakes up later that night.



Jennifer is also comforted by the fact that this waking does not last forever!! As Lily gets older, she will wake up less and less during the night.

It is a long night for both mom and baby, but both wake up healthy and happy. And Jennifer swears that Lily looks like she's grown a few inches during the night. With all of the dreaming and waking she did last night, she must be a genius by now!

Lily is growing so fast. Soon she will be sitting up and rolling over. She will be sleeping longer stretches (this makes mom very happy because she is tired!). Soon Lily will not need her mom as much during the night to help her get back to sleep.

Jennifer is excited that Lily will soon sleep much better, but she is also sad. Her baby is growing up so quickly. Part of her will miss those quiet moments, in the middle of the night, when they are all alone together, snuggling in the moonlight.



Tips and Facts for Tired Parents



- Wait 20 minutes before putting baby down after she falls asleep, OR
- Put baby down to sleep when he is drowsy.
- Make your sleep a priority. The dishes can wait for awhile!
- You will need extra rest to heal from childbirth.
- Sleep when your baby sleeps.
- Accept help with house work or baby care from family and friends so you can rest.
- Baby's first 6 weeks are the hardest for parents. Then it gets easier!
- There is hope: Babies wake up less and less during the night as they get older.



WIC is here to help you better understand your baby. Just ask us!