SLEEP AND SOOTHING GUIDELINES

Young babies usually need a minimum of 6-8 feeds in 24 hours. It is more usual for young babies to have 8-12 feeds in 24 hours. They generally do not feed on an exact every 3hour pattern, but rather have a pattern of 1 longer sleep, a period of 3-4 hours between feeds, and a fussy period for 2-4 hours where they feed frequently (cluster feed) for several hours. This is how your baby may feed 8-12 times in 24 hours. Many people do not have age appropriate expectations of baby behaviour, and expect young babies to do what they are not mature enough to do. **WATCH YOUR BABY'S BODY LANGUAGE**, he/she will communicate his/her needs. Your job is to learn your baby's communication through body language, and you will soon know what your baby's needs are, and be able to soothe and help your baby to sleep easier. In the early days keeping your baby skin to skin as much as possible, helps you see these cues easily.

- **STEP 1**: **Feed your baby when he/she shows you hunger cues**. Feed your baby until he/she takes him/herself off the breast, not falls asleep. Stimulate your baby to continue to suckle until full.

- **STEP 2**: **Put your baby to bed as soon as she/he communicates tired signs**. (You have 10-15min where your baby will fall asleep easily). An over tired, over stimulated baby is much harder to get to go to sleep.

- **STEP 3**: **Gently comfort your baby when fussy**, your baby needs you to help her/him to feel calm at this time. Most often between 9pm – 3am in the first 2-4 weeks. You cannot spoil your baby by meeting his/her needs. Meeting his/her needs helps your baby develop a secure emotional attachment to you. (see over page for strategies).

- **STEP 4**: Once your baby starts to stay awake after feeds, and is alert and calm (playtime), you can then **start to help your baby to fall asleep without assistanc**e. When he/she shows tired signs, put your baby to bed when drowsy. This may start from around 3-4 weeks. Babies take time to learn the skills of both falling asleep without assistance, and then resettling without assistance as they move between sleep states. You can help your baby learn these skills with gentle, consistent support. Cuddle and comfort when distressed. Touch & voice to calm when drowsy, then allow until fall asleep. Continue to soothe as needed.

HUNGER CUES

- Begins to stir
- Opens mouth, licks
- Shows active rooting reflex
- Upper body active, (stretches)
- Wants to suck
- Hands to mouth
- Head bobbing to breast
- Opens eyes
- Makes little noises
- Clenches fists
- **Crying is a late sign of hunger**, feed before crying. **Baby will build up to crying** if other cues are not responded to.

TIRED CUES

- Wants to suck – small comfort sucks
- Clenches firsts
- Frown/ grimace (after a few weeks old)
- More jerky movements (in a few weeks)
- Grizzle cry
- **Sustained loss of eye contact** (most reliable sign in a newborn)
- **Crying is a late sign of tiredness**, put baby to bed on early tired signs, before crying. **Baby will build up to crying** if other cues are not responded to. Baby is now much harder to settle to sleep.

FUSSY CUES

Babies are often fussy for 2-4 hours per 24hr. Often, somewhere between 9pm – 3am for the first 2 – 4 weeks.

- Wants to suck
  - Only comfort sucks
  - Often pulls off
- Clenches fists
- Needs to be held
- **Sudden sharp cry** – that comes and goes, as the bowel stretches and relaxes. Passes wind/stools
- Pulls up legs.

TYPICAL DAY in the FIRST FEW WEEKS.

- Long sleep 4-5 hours. (often after 3am.)
- Period 3-4 hours between feeds, from the beginning of the feed, to beginning of the next feed.
- 2 – 4 hour fussy period, frequent feeds, pass wind / stools, needs to be held. Often somewhere between 9pm–3am, Soon the fussy period will be late afternoon early evening.

Created by Pam Morgan IBCLC. CNC. Postnatal POWP. June 2013; Reviewed by K.Abood June 2013
Reviewed by K.Abood, C.Dunn: December 2014

Reference: Mannel, R. Martens, P. Walker, M. (2012) Core Curriculum for Lactation Consultant Practice.

SLEEP AND SOOTHING GUIDELINES cont…

During the fussy period many parents find their baby needs additional strategies to be comforted. This usually requires hands on support from caregivers. DO NOT expect your baby to go to sleep quietly in his/her cot during this time. DO NOT OVER STIMULATE - BORE YOUR BABY TO SLEEP.
In the first weeks this fussy period may be during the middle of the night. Parents find night-time parenting easier when they accept this is a normal part of newborn baby behaviour (it will not last long), and adapt your life accordingly for a few weeks. Keep number and duration of non-helpful visitors down in hospital and at home in the first weeks. Ask your partner to help in regulating visitors, so as not to offend family and friends.
Many mothers find this especially important on the third and forth day. Many babies will be on and off the breast most of the night on the night before the milk comes in. Often this is the 3rd night. Most mothers are really tired, and teary due to hormonal changes (baby blues) on the 4th day.

SUCKING	TOUCH	HEAT	MOVEMENT	SOUND /SMELL
• Extra breastfeed • Sucking on mum's/dad's clean washed finger. • Dummy. Once breastfeeding is established and going well. 3-4 weeks. Not to put off a feed when baby is hungry, or it may affect your milk supply & baby's weight gain.	• Skin to skin • Cuddles, hold close to chest • Gentle Stroking • Massage • Patting • Wrapping securely to stop startle reflex	• Skin to skin • Cuddles • Warm blanket under baby in the cot. • Wrapping • Deep warm relaxing bath, with warm washer on chest	• Carrying baby in a sling/carrier • Rocking • Pram • Walking • Rocking pram/cot	• Shushing • Heartbeat sounds • Singing to baby • Talking to baby • White noise • Music • Radio • Mums' worn t-shirt tucked tightly under baby.

STRATEGIES TO COPE

- Ensure you get a daytime sleep or rest during quiet time. Turn your phone off during rest time.
- Encourage your partner to help during the fussy period.
- Mums are needed for breastfeeding, but partners or other caregiver can do the fussy time soothing just as well as mum.
- Accept that being a new parent is a FULL TIME job. You also need to give yourself time to recover from the birth.
- Do not have expectations of being able to everything you would normally do in a day.
- Learn to delegate. (Accept that your partner may not do things the way you would – just don't look – it will be ok.)
- As a new mum your only job is to look after yourself and your new baby. Don't forget to eat, and drink to thirst.
- It is your family's job to support you in this role, and take away some of your day to day responsibility for the first weeks while you recover, rest, and get to know your baby. YOU ARE ON YOUR BABY HONEYMOON. Enjoy it.

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