



Wake Windows

Babies 0-24 Months

A guide to better understand wake windows and find your baby's **unique** rhythm

A few things I would like you to know before getting to those wake windows...

This is not a one size fits all.

Just like us, babies have unique sleep needs. Contrary to what all the so-called "sleep experts" and books tell you, just because a baby is certain age, that does not mean they all need the same amount of sleep, either daytime or nighttime sleep.

It is important to know that only the sleep-wake homeostat and the circadian clock will dictate whether your baby falls asleep.

So, no, no matter how hard you try, your baby/child's sleep is not something you can control. Having said that, YOU can do many things to create an environment that is conducive to sleep.

First of all, I want you to think about the way you feel about sleep and your baby/child's sleep. Is it something that stresses you out? Do you dread your baby/child's nap or bed time? Do you feel anxious about it? Do you believe your baby/child's sleep is a reflection of how well you are doing as a parent?

If you answered YES, then I would like to first encourage you to try altering your own feelings and attitudes towards your baby/child's sleep. Babies mirror their parents and their emotions. They are very sensitive to their parents' energy and mood. So, if you do not feel calm and relaxed when it's time to help your baby/child fall asleep, they won't fall asleep that easily or at all even.

Every family and every baby/child are unique. So there is not one schedule that would be perfect for every baby/child at the same age. This is not possible or realistic.

Different factors should be considered when finding the perfect wake pattern for a baby/child. One of the most important ones is your baby/child's temperament, whether they are easy going and flexible, cautious, highly sensitive, or spirited and strong-willed.

It is also important to understand if your baby/child is a high sleep total baby/child or a low sleep total one. This will help you know a bit better how much sleep they actually need in a 24-hour period.

Another way of telling whether or not your baby/child is getting enough sleep is their mood. If your baby/child wakes up happy and they are ready to learn and play then they are probably getting enough sleep. Now, if they are fussy, cranky, irritable and miserable then you might have to adjust things a little bit.

Following a routine each day that aligns with your baby/child's unique rhythm can provide a natural order to the day. This can be helpful when it comes to let your baby/child know when it is time to sleep. I want you to understand that I'm referring to following a set of activities that happen in the same order. I do not want you to think that you have to follow a schedule, because that is not the case. A routine offers predictability, for both parents and babies, while also making room for flexibility and fun. A schedule DOES NOT.

Last but not least, bear in mind that babies grow and their sleep needs change constantly. It is also critical that you understand that factors such as an illness, teething, a more interrupted night sleep, developmental milestones, can and will impact your baby/child's sleep.

What are wake windows?

Wake windows are the optimal amount of time your baby/child is awake before needing to get some sleep, either to have a nap or to go to bed.

Wake windows are an amazing tool if you have a baby/child that does not show sleepy cues. This does not mean that if your baby/child shows sleepy cues such as fussiness, spacing out, yawning, jerky motions, rubbing eyes and ears (among others), you cannot follow these wake windows.

If you have a high energy, free-spirited baby/child, then you know that they can be tired and keep going and going until they have a massive meltdown - because they were tired. And they did not show any sleepy cues, or their sleepy cues are pretty unique and it takes time to really get to know them.

If this is the case, wake windows are great for you to use as a guide and take your time to watch your baby/child, understand their body language and see if you find their "perfect" wake window.

Keep in mind that wake windows are a constant learning curve and it takes a lot of experimenting and lots of changes to find your baby/child's unique rhythm; and even when you think you have found it, it might change overnight because your baby/child is growing and changing by the minute.

How can you find the "perfect" wake window?

The best way to find your baby/child's "perfect" wake window is to log their sleep. You can use the information provided here as a GUIDE.

Get to know your baby/child, their temperament and log their sleep for a week. Note the time that you start putting them down and the time they fall asleep. The amount of time from when they wake for the day/from the previous nap to the time that they fall asleep for their next nap is their wake window.

If it takes your baby/child too long to fall asleep (more than 20-30 minutes), then chances are that they are not tired enough. What can you do then? Try again in 30 minutes when everyone is calmer. Some fresh air might help. A carrier, a pram or even a contact nap are all great strategies if you missed their "perfect" window.

If you feel like you need to make changes, adjust your baby/child's wake window by 15 minutes at a time and keep things consistent for 2-3 days at a time to see if you get different results. It is also a good starting point to experiment with a bedtime that is 15-20 minutes earlier.

If your baby is less than 4 months old, your baby is working on finding their own natural rhythm, so sleep in general can be quite inconsistent. At this age, your baby is really only awake long enough for a feed, a nappy change, a quick play session and then it is back to sleep. It is better to help your baby nap on demand.

Now, without further ado...

Wake Windows Handout

Age

Wake
Window

Birth - 8 weeks

45-60 minutes

2-3 months

60-90 minutes

3-4 months

90-120 minutes

5-6 months

1.5-2.5 hours

Wake Windows Handout

Age	1st nap within	Rest of the day
6 months	1.5-2 hours	2-2.5 hours
7 months	1.5-2 hours	2 hrs 15-2 hrs 45
8 months	2-2.5 hours	2.5-3 hours
9 months	2.5-3 hours	3-3.5 hours
10-12 months	2.5-3 hours	3-4 hours
12-15 months	3-3.5 hours	3-4.5 hours
15-24 months	4-6 hours	4.5-5 hours