

The Perfect Day at 8 - 12 months.

This is a period of transition. Before eight months, the majority of babies will have three day sleeps. By twelve months the majority will have stabilised on two. Transition may be period of some untidiness. This means that some weeks there are days with three sleeps and others where there are two. Few mothers report having trouble with this ambiguity. A common question is which of the three day sleeps is lost first. Often it will be the third day sleep, sometimes referred to as a 'pre dinner nap'.

Clearly, the child is increasing in its social skills and motor abilities. For many children, this will be the time when they begin to take their first steps and share their first words.

Night-time.

For the majority of families night-time is now stable and somewhat similar to the following description.

6.00 – 7.00 pm. Final feed completed and down to bed.

- From bed time on there is no contact until waking in the morning.
- Clearly parents will often check the sleeping child for appropriate position, warmth and safety.
- If the child experiences a period of ill health, which requires night-time attendance, return the child to normal sleep structure as soon as they return to normal health.

6:30 - 7.30 am. Waking to start the day.

- It is relatively easy to judge whether the night sleep has been completed by the style of waking. If the child awakens content, talking and comfortable in their own company, sleep is complete. If they awaken and rapidly demand parental care then the majority of children need a slightly longer sleep.
- Children are relatively intolerant of losing even one sleep cycle, that is approximately 45 minutes, from their full night sleep. If the child awakens 45 to 60 minutes early they can be quite discontent.

Day sleeps.

1. The first day sleep will often begin early e.g. 9.30 – 10:30 am. This sleep will be ideal if it is 2 to 3 sleep cycles long e.g. 90 to 150 minutes.
2. The second day sleep will often begin early in the afternoon e.g. 1 – 2 pm. Again, this is often 2 to 3 sleep cycles long.
3. The third day sleep or 'pre-dinner nap' may be 30 - 45 minutes and will often occur between 4 and 5 pm. This will often be the sleep which disappears first.

By 12 months, the majority of children have two day sleeps. There may be some nights where the child needs that third sleep but it is not possible. On these nights, they may go to bed 30 to 45 minutes early.

Feeding.

Solid food is becoming increasingly important and has become the main source of nutrition for the majority of children. Plan to feed solids at breakfast, lunch and dinner. There is much variation between children as to the volume of food which is consumed. A slightly simplistic statement which I find useful is "a baby eats for the adult they will, be rather than the baby they are". Thus, as a rule of thumb, a boy with tall parents and relatives may eat with remarkable vigour. Conversely, a girl who is genetically going to be petite may have a much more relaxed and less demanding approach to solid food. It is important to allow the child to guide you with regard to volumes. A common area of concern is overfeeding. It is not my experience that children overfeed. If food choices include breast milk, formula, mixed vegetables, mixed fruits, cereals appropriate for babies and a range of other appropriate pre-prepared foods my experience is that there are no later problems with obesity. Children can be quite "round" at this age and be tall and slim by two years of age. The one exception is where the choice of foods is inappropriate. High sugar and high fat foods are inappropriate.

Silent Nights by Dr Brian Symon

For further information and copies of these sheets please visit <http://silentnights.org>

'Silent Nights' is sold as a book published by Oxford University Press.

Developed by Dr Brian Symon. ©