

N.A.P.S. For Babies

Babies cycle between wakeful alert periods and sleep periods (normal rest and alert cycles). The window between opens for a short time and that's when you have to be ready to help her get to sleep. The window isn't open for long, and you must be alert so you don't miss it.

Baby will give you plenty of cues that she is there. The cues are these: she has been looking at you or interacting with you, and suddenly she looks away and loses attention; her eyelids begin to droop just a bit and it's getting harder for her to keep her eyes open; she zones right out with a glazed-over look. And she yawns. Count the yawns! By the third yawn, you'd better have her swaddled and ready for sleep, because after the fourth yawn, the window is closing and if she gets a second wind, she will begin to cry, and you may have to wait to the end of her next alert cycle before she will be ready to go to sleep. And she will probably cry while you wait out that 90 minutes of this alert cycle.

Another open window time comes after a feeding: baby is in that stupor that follows a good satisfying meal. She's on your shoulder, she may have already burped and dozed a little. If she doesn't get down in this optimum drowsy moment, she may wake up enough to realize that she IS awake and would much rather be asleep. That's when she will cry, and you will wonder, is she still hungry? Does she need to burp? Nope it's just that her go-to-sleep moment is fast slipping away. This is when you look at the clock to see how long she has been awake.

The sleep cycle goes from drowsy to light sleep, down into very deep sleep, then begins to get lighter and in a very young baby, sleep becomes so light that she wakes. But she has not slept enough yet. She probably will wake up crying. She does *not* need to eat. She does *not* need to play. She needs to go back into deeper sleep again, and cycle through these short sleeps until she gets her full nap. Anything less than 90 minutes of sleep is not a full nap. *You will have to help your baby get back to sleep during her naps for quite a while, maybe even until she is 3 months old or even older.*

An easy way to accomplish getting baby back to sleep at the right time is to use the NAPS plan

- N** = note the time baby wakes from the end of a *complete* nap.
- A** = add 90 minutes (or if she hasn't grown into a 90-minute cycle add 45 minutes).
- P** = play or participate with her, this includes feeding, bathing, tummy time, playing, errands, etc.
- S** = soothe your sleepy baby back to sleep. This involves diapering and swaddling *just before* the "Clock Dings" so that when the cycle is over, she is ready to go on into sleep without crying or fussing.