

Parent Guide



@twinklparents

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Subject Guides

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What is this resource and how do I use it?

Adjusting to life with a new baby can be exhausting and a good night's sleep can feel like a distant memory. This resource aims to offer an insight into the effect a baby's feeding routine and diet may have on their sleep.

What is the focus of this resource?

Understanding Your Baby

Medical Care

Parenting

Further Ideas and Suggestions

If you're looking for more information on sleep, health or wellbeing, head over to our **Baby** category where you'll find lots of useful information.

Parents Blog



Parenting Wiki



Parenting Podcast



Parents Hub

Foods Which Promote Sleep

When babies are in the womb, they do not experience thirst or hunger as they are fed constantly through the umbilical cord. When they are born, the feeling may come as a bit of a shock to them and so your baby's feeding routine and diet can play a large factor in their sleep patterns. Here, we look into some of the common questions around feeding, nutrition and sleep.

Should I implement a feeding routine to help my newborn baby sleep?

It is a common thought that babies sleep for longer periods with a full tummy, but it is worth considering that encouraging a newborn baby into a fixed routine of regular feeding in the early stages can often lead to longer periods of crying. As exhausting as it can be, responding to your baby's cues and feeding them on demand allows your baby to find their own feeding patterns and routine.

Is breastfeeding or bottle feeding best to help my baby sleep?

There is no research that shows that breastfed babies sleep better or for longer periods than bottle-fed babies, or vice versa. Each method of feeding has its own benefits for promoting sleep:

- Formula takes longer to digest than breastmilk, leaving babies fuller for longer which means they may not wake for their next feed as quickly.
- Breast milk contains the amino acid tryptophan, which in turn helps your baby to produce the sleep hormone melatonin.

Research has shown that there is no difference in the amount of times a baby wakes, whether they are breast or bottle-fed.



Foods Which Promote Sleep

Will weaning my baby help them sleep?

If your baby is ready to begin weaning, there are lots of food groups that you can slowly introduce to promote sleep, which we will discuss later.

Early weaning can have a negative impact on your baby's sleep. Babies who are weaned prematurely can suffer from digestive issues such as constipation, which can lead to disrupted nights. Babies are also more likely to wake through the night to try and make up for the reduced amount of milk they received throughout the day.

Which food groups promote sleep?

- **Tryptophan.** This can be found in dairy products, dried fruit, leafy green vegetables, figs, pulses, beans and sardines.
- **Carbohydrates.** Eating healthy carbs with foods which are high in tryptophan improves absorption and can lead to a deeper sleep. Healthy carbs include wholegrain crackers, wholegrain toast, peanut butter, wheat, oats, hummus and bananas, which are also rich in melatonin and serotonin.

Which food groups prevent sleep?

- **Protein.** Foods which are rich in protein may be best avoided for up to two hours before bedtime, as they can activate dopamine which stimulates the brain.
- **Fibre.** High fibre foods, such as broccoli and cauliflower, are rich in tryptophan but are also difficult to digest, which could keep your baby's body working well into the night. Consider feeding your baby fibre-rich food earlier in the day.

We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. As far as possible, the contents of this resource are reflective of current professional research. However, please be aware that every child is different and information can quickly become out of date. The information given here is intended for general guidance purposes only and may not apply to your specific situation.