

Nighttime Feedings: Phasing Them Out

DESCRIPTION

The first weeks with a newborn are extremely demanding. You need to feed your baby every 2 to 3 hours. Her voracious appetite makes any schedule impossible. You'll be up for feedings at least twice each night. However, when your baby is 1 month old, you can start to shape her feeding behaviors.

HELPING YOUR INFANT GIVE UP MIDDLE-OF-THE-NIGHT FEEDINGS

- Don't feed your newborn more often than every 2 hours. More frequent daytime feedings (such as hourly) lead to frequent awakenings at night. For every time you nurse your baby, there should be four or five times that you snuggle your baby without nursing. Don't let her get into the bad habit of eating every time you hold her. (That's called grazing.)
- Put your baby in the crib drowsy but awake. Her last waking memory needs to be of the crib, not of the breast or bottle. If she learns how to put herself back to sleep, she will not cry after normal awakenings. She will cry at night only if she's hungry, sick, or uncomfortable.
- Make middle-of-the-night feedings brief and boring. Don't turn on the lights or talk to your baby. Feed your child quickly and quietly. During the day you can provide extra rocking and playtime.

With this approach and a little luck, your baby will give up middle-of-the-night feedings between 2 and 4 months of age.

Written by B.D. Schmitt, M.D., author of "Your Child's Health," Bantam Books.