



10 step solution to the 4 months sleep regression



**10 STEP  
SOLUTION TO THE  
4 MONTHS SLEEP  
REGRESSION**

As a parent, one of the most challenging aspects of raising a child is managing their sleep patterns. The 4-month sleep regression is a well-known phase that can make parents feel exhausted and overwhelmed. This guide will provide a comprehensive overview of the 4-month sleep regression, including why it occurs and how it affects babies aged 8-16 weeks. We will also explore the complexities of sleep structure, sleep cycles, REM sleep, NREM sleep, sleep associations, and sleep drive to help you better understand this phenomenon.



# *Understanding Sleep Structure*

Understanding the basics of sleep structure is crucial before delving into the 4-month sleep regression. Sleep is a complex process that comprises distinct stages, each serving a different purpose. Two main stages of sleep are Rapid Eye Movement (REM) and Non-Rapid Eye Movement (NREM), which alternate throughout the night.

# *Sleep Cycles*

The process of sleep is divided into cycles that include both REM and NREM stages. Each cycle lasts around 90 minutes on average. It is important to understand these cycles in order to grasp why the 4-month sleep regression can cause such a disturbance for babies and their caregivers.

## 1. NREM Sleep:

- Stage 1: This is the transitional phase between wakefulness and sleep. It's a light sleep stage, lasting only a few minutes.

- Stage 2: A more stable stage of light sleep that prepares the body for deeper sleep.

- Stage 3 and 4 (Slow-Wave Sleep): These are the deep stages of NREM sleep. Muscle and brain activity decrease significantly. These stages are important for physical and mental restoration.

## 2. REM Sleep:

- This is the dream stage of sleep, characterized by rapid eye movements and increased brain activity. REM sleep is essential for cognitive development and emotional processing.



# *Sleep Development in Infants*

It's essential to understand that babies, especially those in the early months of life, have a unique sleep pattern that varies from child to child but is similar in the order of development. Sleep development in infants is not a linear process but rather follows a trajectory that is specific to each child. This variability is crucial to consider when discussing the 4-month sleep regression, some babies will hit the 4 month sleep regression as early as 8 weeks, others not until 16 weeks.

The sleep has developed in the same way, just the time it takes to get there is different in each child.

1. Newborn babies typically have very immature sleep, and no proper sleep cycles. This can be it appears your baby sleeps soundly for 2-3 hours at a time, sometimes even longer. Giving you the assumption they are seamlessly drifting from one sleep cycle to another. However, they are usually not fully waking up after a sleep cycle, this is why it appears they don't have those 45 minute sleep cycles.

2. Infant Sleep at 8-16 Weeks: Around 8-16 weeks, babies start to exhibit more regular sleep patterns. They have longer periods of sleep at night and may consolidate their sleep into fewer, longer naps during the day. This is also when we start to see some neurological maturing of sleep, and sleep cycles start to form. You might start to see your baby wake after 45 minutes during the day, or struggle at night to get into a deep sleep.

3. The 4-Month Sleep Regression: Between 8 weeks and 5 months of age, many babies experience what is commonly known as the 4-month sleep regression. This regression can be perplexing for parents, as it seems to disrupt the progress made in their infant's sleep pattern. But in fact your baby's sleep is maturing and they are forming sleep cycles, and starting to wake fully after a sleep cycle to check their environment. This is a maturation not a regression, but the appearance of waking more frequently can look to parents like their baby's sleep has regressed.

## *The 4-Month Sleep Regression: What Is It?*

The 4-month sleep regression is a term used to describe a phase in an infant's sleep development during which they experience significant changes in their sleep patterns. This usually occurs between 2 and 5 months of age. Here's what characterises the 4-month sleep regression:

1. Infants who previously slept longer may wake more frequently at night. Typically I see naps fall apart and become short first, and then consequently night sleep starts to become a pattern of 2 hourly wakes, or sometimes 3.
2. Difficulties falling asleep may be accompanied by increased fussiness. Your baby is outgrowing their newborn strategies, but isn't quite at the self settling stage yet. It's difficult!



3. Shorter Naps: It is possible for daytime naps to become shorter and less consistent over time. We see these typically 45 minute sleep cycles in the day and your baby might wake up and cry after this sleep cycle, no longer taking a 2 hour nap. Or if they become super over tired, they might even reduce their naps to 20-30 minutes.

4. Increased Need for Parental Soothing: Babies may need more assistance falling asleep, such as being rocked, nursed, or held. This fussiness builds on these sleep associations and we then baby looking for the same associations every 2 hours at night. Which is usually the point at which parents reach out for help.



## *Why Does the 4-Month Sleep Regression Occur?*

Understanding the reason for the 4-month sleep regression can help parents cope more effectively. This regression is caused by several factors:

1. **Developmental Milestones:** At around 4 months of age, babies reach critical developmental milestones. They become more aware of their surroundings, and their sleep cycles mature. This combination means your baby now does a checking wake each time a sleep cycle ends. One of the biggest factors that leads to your baby crying at this point is if their surroundings have changed. If they fell asleep in your arms and are now in the cot, this means they will call out and look to be back where they initially fell asleep.
2. **Changing Sleep Cycles:** As infants grow, their sleep cycles become more adult-like and they spend more time in lighter, easily disrupted REM sleep, also known as dream sleep. This is a positive as the risk of SIDS is reducing with this change, but it is difficult as your baby is now more awake at the end of their sleep cycles, and more easily affected by how and where they go to sleep.

3. Sleep Associations: During the early months, infants tend to form sleep associations. These associations refer to the cues or conditions they rely on to fall asleep, such as being rocked or nursed. However, when they wake up between sleep cycles, they may find it difficult to recreate the same conditions to fall back asleep. Hence the crying out, they need your assistance to get back to sleep.

## *Sleep Associations and the 4-Month Sleep Regression*

It is crucial to understand sleep associations when it comes to the 4-month sleep regression. These associations include any conditions, activities, or objects that an infant associates with falling asleep. Including...

- Feeding,
- A dummy or pacifier,
- Rocking,
- Holding,
- Walking,
- Bouncing,
- Driving,
- Swaddling,
- White noise,
- Your bed,
- Your arms,
- Patting

During the 4-month sleep regression, these associations can lead to frequent awakenings. When a baby wakes between sleep cycles, they may not find the same conditions that helped them fall asleep initially, leading to difficulties returning to sleep independently.

This is the main factor that we can change in order to combat the 4-month sleep regression.

# *Solutions to the 4-Month Sleep Regression*

## *10 steps to success*

You can spend as little as 2-3 weeks on these 10 steps, or as long as 3-6 weeks if you take things slower and spend more time at each stage.

The choice is yours!

Generally, the younger your child has been hit with the sleep patterns synonymous with the 4-month sleep regression, the longer you will want to spend at each stage. Giving them time to neurologically mature, and develop more self-settling skills.

# *Solutions to the 4-Month Sleep Regression*

*10 steps to success*

## **1 - Start your day at a similar time each day.**

One of the first things we can do to start to settle down sleep when it's gone a bit haywire is start your day at the same or similar time each day. This might mean avoiding those sleep ins when it's been a rough night, but research shows that starting the day at the same time each day has a big positive impact on reinforcing our circadian rhythm and actually making settling at bed time easier!

This is true for babies and adults, so you will be doing yourself a favour too.

If this is tricky because your baby wakes early, if this time is between 6-7am, simply get them up and start the day, you can work on 7am later.

If your baby is waking before 6am, you might want to settle with a feed and a cuddle just until 6/6.30am to get yourself to a reasonable start time of the day. We can remove this sleep association later. For now we just need to encourage baby to sleep until at least 6am and work on a semi consistent start to the day.

Always offer a feed in the morning, even if they've had a night feed recently. Your baby won't be overly interested, but just offering the feed will ensure that they know this is the start of the day, there is food, there is light (natural or artificial), and there is social interaction with mum or dad ( Chat with your baby), this is different to any night wakes where there is minimal light and minimal social interaction. Sometimes there is food but not always.





## 2 - Set up a sleep environment that encourages sleep.

Step two is setting up a sleep environment conducive to sleep. This means you might want to invest in a temporary or permanent black out blind solution, ensure the room is not too hot or too cold, and is either away from distractions in your living space and or/adequately masked by white noise. Even if you aren't a white noise fan, you might find for the next 2-3 weeks it's helpful as you navigate the 4 month sleep regression.

### 3 - Understand routine and awake times.

Step 3 is understanding the importance of routines and awake times. Routines are based on age appropriate awake times and the structure of sleep throughout the day to work with your babies circadian rhythm and support long night sleep. If you want to just work on awake windows you can, just be prepared for things to be a little less consistent each day, which is 100% fine, we just need to have realistic expectations based on what we are doing day to day.

Awake times for babies who are experiencing the 4 month sleep regression are below in a table.



<b>3 months</b>	<b>1 hour and 45 mins</b>
<b>4 months</b>	<b>2 hours</b>
<b>5 months</b>	<b>2 hours and 15 mins</b>
<b>6 months</b>	<b>2.5 hours</b>

If your baby is experiencing short naps, these can seem like long awake times. But if we want to work on longer naps, our awake times need to be long enough to create enough sleep drive that your baby wants to nap for longer than 45 minutes.

I recommend trying the awake time in the age **below** until you start to work on longer naps or follow the cat napping routine below, this will only be 15 minutes less awake time, but will help combat the short naps contributing to over tiredness while we work on better nights.

Once you decide it's time to work on longer naps, move onto the routine that more closely resembles your babies current age. (always correct any routines for your baby being premature).

## *3 Month Old Sleep Routine*

**7am** - Wake baby up to start the day and offer a full feed.

**7.30am** - Use a bridging nap 10 mins long to bridge the gap before their first nap time if awake before 6.30am, and you are aiming for a consistent nap routine.

**8.20/8.30am** - Start pre-nap ritual and settle your baby in their room with the curtains closed.

**8.30/8.45am** - Asleep

I encourage you to cap this morning nap, this helps encourage a longer nap at lunch time which is when babies are naturally tired. A long nap at lunch time means only a short afternoon nap is needed, which then means your baby will be easy to get to sleep for the night by 6.30/7pm.

This morning nap can be reduced down to 60 minutes by 4 months - starting at 9.00am.

This nap should ideally finish at 10am, so it's easy to achieve in the stroller for the school run, or home in time from the school run for their nap.

**10am** - Awake.

**10.30/11am** - Milk feed, offer a top up around 11am if your baby fed much earlier than 10.30am. This will help with the long lunch time nap. Use an optional 10-minute bridging nap if your morning nap was over much earlier than 10am.

**11.30am** - Pre-nap ritual and settle in their bedroom.

**11.45am** - Asleep.

This is the most important nap of the day, it is the one you should focus on making 2 hours.

If your baby wakes in this time, use your re-settling strategy for 20-30 minutes to encourage your baby to go back to sleep. Consider this teaching time before you assist them back to sleep with a rock, cuddle, pat or feed.

**2pm** - Awake.

**2/2.30pm** - Milk feed.

**4.30pm** - Nap for 30 minutes.

By reducing this nap to just 30 minutes, your baby will be easier to settle by 7pm. This nap is dropped by 8 months.

**5pm** - Awake  $\frac{1}{2}$  a milk feed, breast or bottle.

**5.30pm** - Bath and massage.

**6.15pm** - Milk feed in baby's bedroom, in their swaddle or sleeping bag, lights off, encourage your baby to relax and get nice and drowsy taking this final feed of the day. Don't rush them.

**6.30/7pm** - Bed for the night (straight after your babies feed ends, don't try to keep your baby up until 7pm if they have finished feeding and are very tired).

Obviously 10/15-minute variations are fine as long as you don't let them get over tired or under tired. Look for those cues you have learnt about and put them into context with the time of the day.

Try keeping a sleep log to look for patterns along the way. A template is provided at the back of this guide.



## *4 Month Old Sleep Routine*

**7am** - Wake baby up to start the day and offer a full feed.

**7.30am** - Use a bridging nap 10 mins long to bridge the gap before their first nap time if awake before 6.30am, and you are aiming for a consistent nap routine.

**8.30/8.45am** - Start pre-nap ritual and settle your baby in their room with the curtains closed.

**9am** - Asleep.

I encourage you to cap this morning nap, this helps encourage a longer nap at lunch time which is when babies are naturally tired. A long nap at lunch time means only a short afternoon nap is needed, which then means your baby will be easy to get to sleep for the night by 6.30/7pm.

This morning nap can be reduced down to 30 minutes by 6 months - starting at 9.30am.



This nap is short and easily achieved on the run, don't feel tied to home all day.

**10am** - Awake.

**10.30/11am** - Split milk feed, offer a feed at 10.30am and top up around 11am. This will help with the lunch time nap at 12pm. If you are starting solids, you will offer solids here at 11am after the 10.30am milk.

**11.45am** - Pre-nap ritual in their bedroom.

**12pm** - Asleep.

This is the most important nap of the day, it is the one you should focus on making 2 hours.

The start of this nap moves to 12.30pm by 6 months (2.5 hours awake).

If your baby wakes in this time, use your re-settling strategy to teach your baby to go back to sleep. Attempt re-settling for up to an hour or until this nap is over, whichever arrives first.

**2pm** - Awake.

**2/2.30pm** - Milk feed.

**4.30pm** - Nap for 30 minutes, feel free to go for a walk, use a baby carrier, or stroller to ensure this nap happens. It's a tricky time of the day to ensure that a nap happens.

By reducing this nap to just 30 minutes, your baby will be easier to settle by 7pm. This nap is dropped by 8 months.

**5pm** - Awake  $\frac{1}{2}$  a milk feed, if you have started solids, you could offer solids here after this milk feed.

**5.30pm** - Bath and massage.

**6.15/6.30pm** - Milk feed in baby's bedroom, in their swaddle or sleeping bag, lights off, encourage your baby to relax and get nice and drowsy taking this final feed of the day.

**6.30/7pm** - Bed for the night (straight after your babies fed ends, don't try to keep your baby up until 7pm if they have finished feeding and are very tired).

Obviously, 10/15-minute variations are fine as long as you don't let them get over tired or under tired. Look for those cues you have learnt about and put them into context with the time of the day.



## *5 Month Old Sleep Routine*

**7am** - Wake baby up to start the day and offer a full feed.

**7.30am** - Use a bridging nap 10 mins long to bridge the gap before their first nap time if awake before 6.30am, and you are aiming for a consistent nap routine.

**9am** - Start pre-nap ritual and settle your baby in their room with the curtains closed.

**9.15am** - Asleep.

This nap is short and easily achieved on the run, don't feel tied to home all day.

**10am** - Awake.

**10.30/11am** - Split milk feed, offer a feed at 10.30am and top up around 11am. This will help with the lunch time nap at 12pm. If you are starting solids, you will offer solids here at 11am after the 10.30am milk.

**12pm** - Pre-nap ritual and settling in their bedroom.

**12.15pm** - Asleep.

This is the most important nap of the day, it is the one you should focus on making 2 hours.

The start of this nap moves to 12.30pm by 6 months (2.5 hours awake).

Use your re-settling strategy here if your baby wakes before 2pm.

**2/2.15pm** - Awake and feed.

**4.30pm** - Nap for 20-30 minutes, this nap might be getting as short as 15-20 minutes, don't worry, this is your nap gradually getting ready to be dropped.

**5pm** - Awake  $\frac{1}{2}$  a milk feed or if you have started solids you could offer solids here.

**5.30pm** - Bath and massage.

**6.15pm** - Milk feed before bed.

This last feed of the day should be done in your baby's room with the lights off and just a small night light on. This period of relaxed quiet time, with low lights will help them settle easily for the night.

**6.30/7pm** - Bed for the night.



## *6 Month Old Sleep Routine*

**7am** - Wake baby to start the day and offer full milk feed.

**7.30am** - Use a bridging nap 10 mins long to bridge the gap before their first nap time if awake before 6.30am, and you are aiming for a consistent nap routine.

**9.15am** - Begin pre-nap ritual.

**9.30am** - Nap.

**10am** - Wake baby.

**10.30am** - Milk feed, breast or bottle.

**11am** - Lunch solids, ensure you are feeding protein in here not dinner. Start lunch time solids no later than 1 hour before lunch nap to avoid nap time disruption due to food digestion.

**12.15pm** - Pre-nap ritual and settle baby in bedroom.

**12.30pm** - Nap, use your re-settling strategy here if your baby wakes before 2pm. Sleep coaching until 2pm consistently is the fastest way to resolve short nap issues.

This is the most important nap of the day, it is the one you should focus on making 2 hours.

**2.30pm** - Awake and milk feed.

**4.30pm** - Short nap before bed time routine. This will likely become 15-20 minutes, allow baby to naturally shorten this nap. We are getting baby ready to drop this nap.

5pm - Dinner, solids before or after a small milk feed. Be careful not to put baby off their bed time milk feed.

**5.30pm** - Bath.

**6/6.15pm** - Full milk feed and bed.

This feed should be done in your baby's room with the lights out, and in their sleeping bag ready to go to sleep for the night by 6.30/7pm.



## *Cat napping routine*

If you are not working on consolidating your babies lunch nap, that is fine and this is obviously totally up to you. Some reasons might be that you initially want to work on better night sleep before tackling the day sleep, or you are happy with the short cat naps as long as you baby self-settles, etc.

In these cases you may want to consider this cat napping routine, as with all routines, 15 minute variations are normal, have a look at your babies sleep cues within context and try the below routine.

**7am** - Wake baby to start the day and offer full milk feed.

**7.30am** - Use a bridging nap 10 mins long to bridge the gap before their first nap time if awake before 6.30am, and you are aiming for a consistent nap routine.

**8.45am** - Begin pre-nap ritual.

**9.00am** - Nap.

**9.45am** - Baby wakes if only cat napping

**10.30am** - Milk feed, breast or bottle.

**11am** - Lunch solids, if you are offering solids, this is optional as this routine is designed for children aged 3-5 months, not all children will be having solids.

**11.45am** - Pre-nap ritual and settle baby in bedroom.

**12.00pm** - Nap, if baby wakes after 45 minutes, try to wait 10 minutes to see if baby re-settles naturally before going in and getting baby up.

This will be the time where eventually your baby takes a longer nap.

**12.45pm/1pm** - baby possibly awake, but no need to feed unless baby demanding a feed as they have probably just woken due to the end of a sleep cycle as opposed to being hungry, and we don't want to snack feed all afternoon.

**1.30/1.45pm** -milk feed.

**2/2.30pm** -short nap no more than 45 minutes to ensure baby will take another nap at 4.30pm - optional top up feed upon waking from this short nap.

**4.30pm** - Short nap before bed time routine. This will likely become 15-20 minutes, allow baby to naturally shorten this nap. We are getting baby ready to drop this nap.

**5pm** - Milk feed, followed by optional solids if you are already feeding baby solids.

**5.30pm** - Bath.

**6/6.15pm** - Full milk feed and bed.

This feed should be done in your baby's room with the lights out, and in their sleeping bag ready to go to sleep for the night by 6.30/7pm.

## 4 - Establish a consistent bedtime routine.

Step 4, we need to establish a consistent bedtime routine. If you have started to follow the above advice on awake times or routines, your baby should be nice and tired between 6-7pm, and this will help us to establish a bedtime routine to encourage good night sleep.

Start with a short feed around 5pm (or when your last nap of the day ends), then a bath, and dim the lights.

A massage after your baby's bath can help them settle faster and easier, as can getting the timing right. If your baby has been having short naps all day, they will be TIRED in the evening, don't try to drag their bedtime out if they're showing tired signs.

After the bath, with your lights on dim to encourage your baby to start to produce delicious sleep hormone melatonin, get your baby dressed and move into their sleep room.

Give them their final feed of the day, and have big snuggles before bed. Try to start to put your baby to bed more awake here than you have been doing. You can still do a big feed and lots of cuddles, but try to put your baby down awake so they are aware they're going to bed in their bed, and not in your arms. This should help with better night sleep.

If they cry and fuss and don't easily settle, you might have to use the strategy outlined in step 8 for creating 4 hourly feeds at night to settle your baby to sleep at the start of the night. Give your consistent bedtime routine at least 3 days to take effect before moving onto step 5.

Use a swaddle or sleeping bag for your babies night sleep. If they're not yet rolling and are under 4 months, I recommend a good swaddle. You can move onto a sleeping bag once they are starting to show signs of rolling over. But there is no rush to make this transition if they are not rolling back to tummy, and often younger babies sleep better swaddled than unswaddled.

## 5 - Move any feeds away from naps by at least 15 minutes.

Step 5 is designed to avoid any feed to sleep associations in the day, or if there already is one, gradually move away from this.

We want to avoid feed to sleep associations for naps if possible, as these do tend to mean your baby will be looking for a feed to get back to sleep during their naps after a short sleep cycle.

I recommend you move any top up feeds 15 minutes before a nap so that your baby is at least partially awake if not fully awake when they go into their cot. You can still have a lovely relaxing pre sleep wind down before their nap, including, swaddling or sleeping bags, cuddles, songs, ect. We just want to move that feed to the start of this routine IF you do one, or outside the room before the pre sleep wind down.

If you don't have a top up feed you're using to get your baby to take naps in the day, then this step is not needed for you.

## 6 - Overnight start to do a nappy change after any feeds to ensure baby is going to bed awake not asleep after a feed.

Step 6 is about starting to teach your baby to go back to sleep at night not while feeding. This means over time if they wake up when they're not hungry, simply at the end of a sleep cycle they can start to go back sleep on their own.

The easiest way to do this is by doing a nappy change after you have done a feed. This way the last thing that happens before your baby goes back to sleep is not a feed. You can still cuddle and hold to settle if your baby wont be put down awake, but we are just removing the association of needing to feed to get back to sleep.

If your baby fell straight back to sleep the minute you started feeding, this is a clear feed to sleep association, I still recommend using a nappy change to rouse them slightly before putting them back to bed. This will make the next few steps easier.

Give this a few days to take effect at night, while continuing with stages 1- 5 also.





## 7 - Begin to establish the 3 minute rule for night wakes and the start and end of naps.

Step 7 is about some very good research that showed one of the key factors in determining whether a baby is a long night sleeper or a short or fragmented night sleeper by 12 months, was how quickly parents responded to wakes at night.

This isn't about hours and hours of CIO, but simply a small period of time so that if your baby is going to go back to sleep easily, they do. Or if they're just in active sleep and aren't actually awake you don't disturb them, or giving them a short time frame to practise settling before you swoop in to help.

The magic amount of time from this study appears to be 3 minutes.

If you can start a small habit of waiting 3 minutes when your baby wakes at night, you are on the right track!

You might start with only 1 minute because your baby is too upset, or you are too anxious, and that's ok. Hopefully over the coming days with steps 1-6 in place you start to feel more confident and your baby starts to build on their settling skills and the 3 minutes starts to feel achievable, maybe even easy!

Give this step at least 3 days to kick in.

Carry this 3 minutes rule with you long term, it will serve you well as your baby gets older and goes through many more sleep regressions.

What to do after the 3 minutes you ask?

At this stage (before stage 8), you can feed, or cuddle, or rock, or dummy, do what ever is easy for you and your little one, we are working on more consolidated sleep in step 8, and that is where some self settling skills will be taught.



## 8 - Work on 4 hourly night feeds.

Step 8 is about getting back to 4 hourly feeds if you have found yourself in a situation where you feed every 1-2 hours at night. What happens when we feed every 1-2 hours is our babies start to reverse cycle, and take in more calories in the night that they are in the day.

This means they don't feed as well in the day, can appear to become fussy feeders, and it feel impossible to drop night feeds because of how poorly they are feeding in the day.

The solution is an intermediate goal of just working on 4 hourly feeds.

We know from pediatricians that a 4 hourly feeding schedule at night is age appropriate from 4kg, so for 99% of babies going through the 4 month sleep regression and feeding frequently this is an age appropriate goal.

## *What does 4 hourly feeds at night look like?*

If your baby feeds at 6.30pm (bed time), we would be aiming to feed no earlier than 10.30pm, 2.30am, and 6.30am. Essentially your baby gets through the night on just 2 feeds.

If your baby feeds at 6.30pm, but doesn't wake for a feed until 11pm, then their second feed would be no sooner than 4 hours later which would be 3am, followed by 7am.

But if your baby feeds at bed time (6.30pm) then wakes at say 8 or 9pm, this is where we need to work on teaching them to go back to sleep in order to create this 4 hourly night feed schedule.

How?



# How to re-settle at night

**Baby wakes and cries out? - We don't watch monitors!**

Don't rush this, if they're Ok leave them!

Learning and up cry vs a down cry takes time.

**Wait 3 minutes, are they crying up or down?**

**If crying up, go in and rub or pat baby's back, or, hand on chest.**

If they're squirming away don't force it.

**Shush and re-assure baby if upset.**

**Give baby another 3 minutes. Either leave, or sit by the cot.**

Optional to double the time here to 6 minutes.

**If they're not crying up, wait until they do for at least 30 seconds.**

**If crying up, rub or pat baby's back, or, hand on chest.**

**Repeat this cycle until baby goes back to sleep, or they are due a feed.**

## *Trouble shooting the night time re-settle.*

Can I use the re-settle approach at night if my baby is waking for a sleep association other than a feed?

100% yes! Continue to just aim for 4 hourly feeds, and use the above approach to settle instead of any other sleep associations like a dummy or rocking to sleep.



## *How long is too long to re-settle?*

Ideally, we want baby to go back to sleep and sleep until they are due a feed. But if you have been trying for more than 40 minutes and they are showing no signs of going back to sleep, give them a feed and pop them down awake, you can try again if they wake sooner than 4 hours. Often they won't as the extra awake time while settling gives you extra sleep drive and longer night sleep.



## *I'm re-settling and feeding 4 hourly, when will they do it themselves?*

Each night that you work on re-settling and sticking no sooner than 4 hourly night feeds you are teaching the skill of re-settling. As long as you gradually reduce how much you actively re-settle your baby is gradually learning these skills, but they do take time.

I expect to see results in 3-6 days as your baby is picking up these settling skills and your consistency is paying off.



## *How do I know if 4 hourly night feeds is safe for my baby?*

If you're worried your baby can't go 4 hours between night feeds ask your baby's doctor or well child nurse for their advice on how many night feeds your baby needs.

Can I just work on one wake up at a time?

Yes you can work on just the wakes before 10.30/11pm and then later on work on the second part of the night. Stagger things as you need to for your own wellbeing.

## 9 - Work on a longer lunch nap.

Step 9 is about working on the longer lunch nap. I recommend starting this step when night sleep has improved and you feel confident and ready. We don't want to overwhelm ourselves.

If your baby is having a short morning nap, I wouldn't worry about lengthening it, as they will outgrow the need for a longer morning nap in the time it takes you to establish one!

If you feel your baby can't make it close to midday with their short morning nap you can start your lunch nap as early as 11.45am, but try to move their midday nap to 12pm or their routine time (above), as soon as you feel they can cope.

**If you are still helping your baby to get to sleep at lunch time and they're having a short nap, the first step is teaching them to go to sleep for this nap on their own.**

Follow the below steps to teach them to go to sleep for their lunch nap on their own.

# *Put your baby down awake.*

**Leave the room or sit by the cot for 3 minutes.**

If you're comfortable with longer that's ok too!

**If they're not crying up, wait until they do for 30 seconds.**

Listen carefully, is your baby just grizzly?

**If crying up, rub or pat baby's back, or, hand on chest.**

Use a big cuddle to soothe when needed.

**Shush and re-assure baby if upset.**

**Give baby another 3 minutes. Either leave, or sit by the cot.**

If your baby sits or stands, lie them down.

**If they're not crying up, wait until they do for 30 seconds.**

**If crying up, rub or pat baby's back, or, hand on chest.**

**Repeat the cycle.**

## Once they've gotten the hang on going down awake, work on a longer nap.

Once your baby is confidently settling on their own without your assistance to get them to sleep, you can move on with extending this nap, if it's still short.

A lot of babies will extend this nap naturally once they can settle themselves to sleep.

You can choose to wait a week or 2 for them settling themselves for this nap, and just give them 3 minutes to try to go back to sleep before getting them up if you like.

This is a much more passive way of seeing if this second nap lengthens on its own, and for some babies, this works!

If you prefer to get started now, or you've waited a week or two and they won't extend the nap, follow the steps below to teach your baby to go back to sleep after a sleep cycle in the day.

# Longer nap re-settle.

**Baby wakes and cries out? - We don't watch monitors!**

Don't rush this, if they're Ok leave them!

Learning and up cry vs a down cry takes time.

**Wait 3 minutes, are they crying up or down?**

**If crying up, go in and rub or pat baby's back, or, hand on chest.**

If they're squirming away don't force it.

**Shush and re-assure baby if upset.**

**Give baby another 3 minutes. Either leave, or sit by the cot.**

Optional to double the time here to 6 minutes.

**If they're not crying up, wait until they do for at least 30 seconds.**

**If crying up, rub or pat baby's back, or, hand on chest.**

**Repeat the cycle for 20-40 minutes for the second nap only.**

## *What if my baby has a dummy?*

If they're under 7/8 months, I would only use it during the pre sleep wind down, and then remove it and teach to settle without it. After 7/8 months you can place it in their hand and teach them to put it in themselves.



## *What if my baby wont stop crying?*

if at any stage you feel your baby is too upset and needs assistance with co-regulation, simply pick them up and give them a big boring cuddle.

Hold them, stay still. Don't pace or bounce, just hold and pat or run their back. You can shush, but try not to switch sides and move around panicking.

Be calm yourself, calm breeds calm.

Be patient, you are being responsive, give them time to regulate with you.

This big boring cuddle might be 5 minutes, it might need to be 10 if they're very upset.

Once you hear their breathing calm, pop them back to bed, and start the process again.

Over the coming days you will use this less frequently and they will do more settling in the cot.

*I've been holding to sleep, can I help them learn to sleep in the cot before I let them learn to self settle?*

Yes! Do your pre sleep ritual as planned, and then put baby down awake, but pat to sleep in the cot. If they become very upset, pick up and do the big boring cuddle and carry on until you manage to pat to sleep in the cot.

Give this 2-3 extra days to teach them, naps happen in the cot.

Then you can start to let them self settle, and only pat to calm not to sleep.



## *How long do I try this for?*

Try and settle for 40-60 minutes (less for the morning nap, more for the lunch nap, and don't worry about nap 3!)

## *What if they don't settle in that time?*

If you near the end of your 40 minutes and they're calm and nearly asleep, you could pat to sleep, knowing we can wean off this.

If they're upset and not settling, cancel the nap and get them up.

You can try again in an hour or so after a feed and a break, or you can try tomorrow and just assist to sleep for the day if you need a break.

*What if I end up off routine while they're learning because I have to cancel a nap and try later?*

Short term problem, don't panic, use awake times for the day instead of routine and get on track the next day.

## *What if they're sitting up?*

Each time you go to use your touch to help them calm, you can lie them down.

This is to teach them we have to lie down to go to sleep.

You might do this 5-10 times before giving them another 3 minutes of space to try to settle themselves.

## *What if they're standing up?*

Each time you go to use your touch to help them calm, you can lie them down.

This is to teach them we have to lie down to go to sleep.

You might do this 5-10 times before giving them another 3 minutes of space to try to settle themselves.

I do the scoop and lie down all inside the cot barriers so they don't think I'm picking them up constantly.

*Can I wait outside the room longer than 3 minutes?*

Yes! If you're comfortable with longer, wait for up to 10 minutes of crying time.



## *What if they're not crying up?*

If during your 3 minute wait they are just grizzling, or quiet or intermittently crying, just stay out. They might just go to sleep! If they start to properly cry, and it lasts 3 minutes, then go and start your settling.

## *What does crying up mean?*

Crying is escalating, crying harder and harder or if they went straight to an emotional cry and stayed there.



## *What do I do if I choose to sit there?*

Sit on a chair by the cot and close your eyes, model sleep. If they're at the standing stage, sit on the floor. Be patient! Wait 3 minutes.

## *How long do I re-settle for?*

Try 20-40 minutes, but only for the middle nap, not nap 1! If you do want a longer morning nap, you can use this re-settle, but then let nap 2 be shorter. Don't expect 2 long naps.

## *My baby is wide awake what is the point?*

If they're wide awake happy...leave the room, you don't need to be in there.

If they're upset while you try and settle and show no signs of re-settling, that's ok!

This is teaching time, and it takes time for them to learn to re-settle.

## *How many days before I see success?*

If your baby has already mastered self settling at the start of the nap, re-settling will take another 3-7 days to master.

If you're not seeing results, ie less crying more attempts to settle, you need to do a little less. Back off your interactions a bit.

## *Can I rescue the nap instead?*

If you just want to focus initially on self settling at the start and rescue the nap to extend it you can. Then you can start to work on re-settling independently when you're ready.

## *Why is re-settling so much harder?*

Sleep pressure has massively reduced after 1 sleep cycle, so its harder to go **back** to sleep, than it is to initially fall asleep. Therefore it generally takes 2-3 times as long for them to learn to re-settle than it did to learn to self settle for the start of the nap.

be patient.

## *Can I pat back to sleep instead?*

If your baby likes to be patted to sleep, yes! Then once you teach them over 7 days to take a longer nap, start to pat a little less each day and let them do more themselves.

## *Can I stay out of the room for longer?*

Yes. If you prefer, you can stay out for 10 minutes at a time, and let your baby to try to get back to sleep on their own.





## *Can I feed, I'm worried they're hungry?*

Offer a small feed any time you're worried they're hungry.

If it starts to look like a habit has developed, you can stop this.

## 10 - Use bridging naps when needed.

The final step as we combat the 4 month sleep regression is about how to stay on routine or on awake windows when naps are a bit haywire.

For this I use bridging naps.

A bridging nap bridges the time from an early wake in a nap or early in the morning to their first scheduled nap.

A bridging nap is usually done in your arms with a quick feed or cuddle to sleep. I don't try to use self settling for a bridging nap.

Times I offer a 10 minute bridging nap are

**7.30am** if baby woke early in the morning.

**10.30am** if baby had a short morning nap.

**2.30pm** if baby had a short lunch nap.

These don't work for all babies and some parents find they are not worth the effort. They are just 1 tool you can have in your tool kit to help stay on track while working on better naps.

Remember tackling the 4 month sleep regression takes time and patience.

But it's worth it when you meet some of our clients who have been stuck in this pattern of short naps and broken nights for 8-9 months!





## Author

**Emma Purdue** is the owner and founder of Baby Sleep Consultant NZ and Australia, Happiest Baby on the Block educator, and Mother of 3. She has a Bachelor of Science and a Diploma in Education from the University of Auckland.

Her approaches in child sleep have led to developing an international training company, certifying and training sleep consultants worldwide. [www.babysleepconsultanttraining.com](http://www.babysleepconsultanttraining.com)

Emma's team of consultants has helped over 100,000 tired parents around the world; they understand sleep in all areas, as well as parental stress and the emotional challenge we face as parents when trying to improve our children's sleep.

It's not easy and you only want what's best for your child. The Baby Sleep Consultant Team have many free resources on our website in addition to this sleep guide [www.babysleepconsultant.co](http://www.babysleepconsultant.co)

We have live sleep Q&A on our Instagram every Sunday <https://www.instagram.com/babysleepconsultant/> join us for one soon!

If you need some one on one assistance we offer phone, email and home consults, please get in touch [admin@babysleepconsultant.co.nz](mailto:admin@babysleepconsultant.co.nz)

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