

Sleep Regression

What Is Sleep Regression?

Sleep regression is a phase that happens when a baby who was sleeping well for a while start to wake up more during the night and start having shorter and/or less naps. While the term suggests a return to a less-developed stage, sleep regression often indicates a period of positive growth or development for baby.

Sleep regression is a perfectly normal part of your baby's development.

What Causes Sleep Regression?

There are several factors that affect baby's sleep routine, repeated periods of sleep regression usually correspond with some major developmental events. These are some of the most common reasons to explain baby's sudden disinterest in sleep:

- A growth spurt, which makes babies extra hungry
- Teething pain
- Reaching a new developmental milestone
- Disruptions in routines, like starting nursey/day care
- Traveling, as this involves sleeping in a new environment
- An illness, such as a cold or an ear infection
- Health issues, reflux, asthma or eczema.

How Long Does Sleep Regression Last?

There's no precise timeline. A sleep regression period can last anywhere from two to six weeks.

Signs of Sleep Regression

- Shorter naps
- Excessive crankiness during the day or night
- Fussing; not wanting to settle down
- Sleeping for only small periods of time
- Middle-of-the-night wakeups

The typical infant sleep regression ages are:

4 months. This the result of your baby passing through a big developmental milestone. They are learning to roll or flipping over. They are becoming more aware of their environment, which is distracting for them. They are starting to develop associations, so they begin to 'need' a parent, a bottle, a dummy/pacifier.

6 months. This the result of your baby passing through a big developmental milestone. They are rolling over. They are babbling, this new skill to babble and coo could be busying them in the crib. Learning to crawl and sit up, as they are leaning to move more in play activities and tummy time, they may want to continue this during the night. Social developments can also affect your baby's sleep, including separation anxiety which can start up for some babies when they hit the 6-month mark. Teething, which tends to peak somewhere between 6 and 12 months, may impact sleep.

8-months. Sleep regression can happen between 8 and 10 months. This the result of your baby passing through a big developmental milestone. Crawling and talking: their speech and physical skills are developing, and they often practice these movements during the night. Babies typically start to experience separation anxiety between 8 and 10 months old when a parent or caregiver leaves the room or goes somewhere without them. Your baby can go through the upset of separation anxiety at bedtime when you put baby down in their cot and leave the room.

12 months. This the result of your baby passing through a big developmental milestone. At this age babies are typically learning to talk more, stand up, walk or have started to walk. This may leave them feeling fidgety and wanting to practice the new skills during the night. Night fright, they may be experiencing nighttime fears or even nightmares due to their developing imagination. They are learning to become more independence and therefore may start to challenge the normal bedtime routine. Changes in daytime nap periods, around this age it is common for babies to reject morning naps and have shorter naps in the afternoon, this can lead to overtiredness which can affect their nighttime sleep.

When to be concerned and seek medical advice

You should check with your medical professional i.e. doctor, health visitor, paediatrician about night wakings if:

- Your baby is eating less than normal during the day.
- Your baby is having fewer than four wet diapers and three bowel movements per day.
- Your baby doesn't seem to be gaining weight.
- Your baby is sick i.e. high temperature, earache coughing, has a rash.

Hot tips for Dealing with Sleep Regression

- 1) Remember, every baby is different.
- 2) Be consistent. To encourage babies to fall asleep on their own, so put them down when they are drowsy. Be constant about your bedtime routine.
- 3) Help your baby stay rested. Including nighttime and naps babies this age generally needs 12 to 17 hours of total sleep. That generally amounts to between 10 and 12 hours at night.
 - 0 to 3 months old: a total of 14 to 17 hours
 - 4 to 11 months olds: a total of 12 to 15 hours.

If the regression is causing your baby to get less sleep at night and so is more tired during the day, encourage them to take more daytime naps, to avoid overtiredness.

- 4) Allow baby to self-soothe. Let them babble to themselves. Give your baby time (a few minutes) and space to self-soothe. If your baby is crying after a few minutes during their sleep regression, stroke your baby's head, arm or tummy lightly, and whisper gently for them to go to sleep.
- 5) Try to avoid relying on feedings your baby straight away when they wake. Many 3- and 4-month-olds still require feeding once or twice overnight. But if your baby is waking up more frequently or at other times when they don't normally try to soothe them without the breast or bottle.
- 6) Keep yourself and the environment calm. Keep the lights off or dim, and try to hold back from interacting with your baby too much

- 7) Practice separation. Play games such as bee-a-boo and hide and seek with your baby to help them learn that even though they cannot see you, you're still around and will come back.
- 8) Self-talk. Remember to tell yourself that reaching big milestones can cause temporary sleep problems. It's normal and will past.