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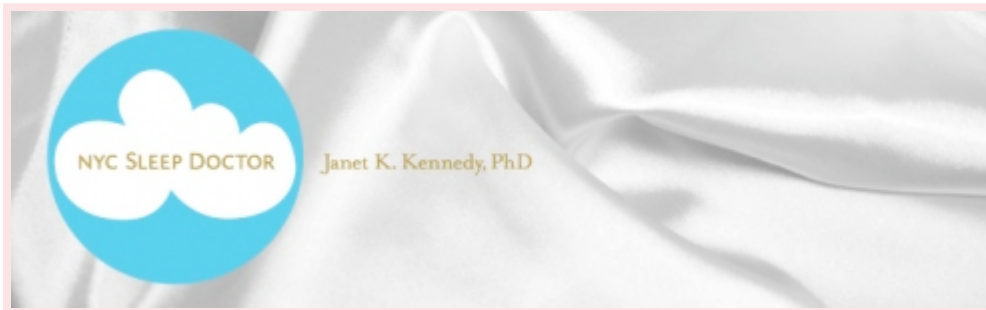
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Expert Advice: Eat, Play, Sleep

18 Feb



Eat, play, sleep. Repeat.

That's Baby E's basic itinerary at home and, on a good day, the sleep portion makes up more than half of her 24 hours. Still, with life's inevitable changes, maintaining appropriate intervals of shut eye isn't always easy—especially when traveling. Even the best-laid plans sometimes go awry. To help navigate the many adventures of sleep, I consulted expert [Janet K. Kennedy, PhD, aka the NYC Sleep Doctor](#).

1. Tell me about a bit your background. How did you become a sleep expert?

I began working at the Manhattan VA Medical Center after completing my PhD in clinical psychology at NYU. There, I developed and implemented a sleep disorders treatment program to treat adult insomnia. Later, as I started my own family, I began researching infant

sleep—initially to try to raise my own good sleepers. Over time, I found myself interpreting sleep books and coming up with solutions for friends and family struggling with their kids' sleep. In 2008, I opened my practice, NYC Sleep Doctor, to guide parents through the process of establishing good sleep patterns and also to treat sleep disorders in adults.

2. Why is scheduled sleep so important for babies?

Scheduled sleep is important for everyone. Our bodies function much better when our sleep is regulated. It is also easier to fall asleep and get good quality sleep if the schedule is consistent. This is even more important for babies because it is very easy for them to become overtired. When that happens, the body releases adrenaline that interferes with the sleep process. Overtired babies have a hard time falling asleep and staying asleep.

3. At what age, should you start implementing a regimented sleep routine at night?

From the start, it is helpful to develop a basic routine: like making it dark in baby's room or area, singing certain songs, feeding or soothing. It is also important to keep stimulation low during night feeding or waking so the baby learns that it is not play time. In the early days and weeks, the routine doesn't always work and it can be hard to remain consistent. As time goes on and the baby passes through the fussy phase (10-12 weeks), the routine can develop more consistency and become (somewhat) more elaborate. I don't think that the routine has to be regimented. It just needs to provide cues to the baby that help him relax and tell him that it's time to sleep. The goal of the routine is to put the baby down awake and have him fall asleep on his own. That will happen with proper timing and a consistent, but not rigid, routine.

4. What about naps?

I recommend developing a simple nap routine at around 10-12 weeks as the naps start to lengthen, earlier if the baby falls asleep easily. As the naps lengthen, the baby will eat after sleeping instead of before the nap (with the exception of the bedtime feeding), and the routine will take the place of the pre-nap feeding.

5. If the baby's schedule changes while traveling, what's the best way to get back on track?

Babies get overtired when traveling and they can resume old habits (like night waking or feeding). The best way to get back on track is to start right away and be very consistent. Be vigilant about good quality naps at home and early bedtimes.

6. If you're traveling to a different time zone, should you try to keep the baby on your home time or switch to the new time? In other words, how to you handle jet lag with kids?

It depends on how long you will be gone. The body generally adapts to the new time whether we want it to or not. If you're staying for more than a few days, it's worth trying to switch the baby's clock as soon as possible. The key is to keep the baby from sleeping when she should

be awake. For example: a baby might go to sleep for the third nap but sleep several hours because the body is set for nighttime. Waking the baby from the nap so she will be ready for bed at her usual time will help to reset her clock. Getting light and fresh air when awake also helps to set the body clock. You can also try to split the difference and reorient the body clock to something in between the two time zones.

7. Is it okay for your baby to nap in a stroller or should naps always happen in a crib?

Naps in the crib are better quality for several reasons. The movement of the stroller can be soothing, but it keeps the brain from settling into deep, restorative sleep. The noise and stimulation of the environment also affects the nap quality. And it is helpful for the baby to be able to change positions during sleep. That said, life intervenes and it is necessary to have a stroller nap sometimes. A good rule of thumb is to avoid stroller napping for multiple naps in one day and on consecutive days.

8. Any other words of advice about sleep when traveling?

Try to avoid starting (or reverting to) habits you'll have to break later. If you don't co-sleep at home, don't co-sleep on vacation. If your baby does not feed at night, don't start feeding him while you're away. Try not to miss too many naps. If naps or night sleep become a problem, slow down your agenda and get the baby rested again. But balance that with having a good time!

If you have specific questions about your child's sleep behavior, [contact the Sleep Doctor](#) for a private consultation. And if there are other areas related to parenting and/or travel you'd like to hear about from experts, let us know in the Comments section. "Expert Advice" may just become a regular feature here on Parenture.com, so check back for future interviews.

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