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child + family health service

PARENTING WITH CONFIDENCE



Settling babies 3-6 months

In this Tweddle FAQ, Tweddle Clinical Nurse Consultant and Maternal and Child Health Nurse Clare Pridham talks about babies between 3-6 months of age.

Q. What sleep cues can parents look for so they know when to start settling their baby for sleep?

A. Tired cues are one or a combination of - change in facial expression, grimacing, frowning, clenched fists or stiff rigid limbs, jerky movements, minimal movement or little activity, resisting distraction, seeking to be picked up, sucking, staring blankly, yawning, grizzling, crying.

Q. What tips do you have around putting baby to sleep drowsy but awake? At what age can you start implementing this?

A. Responding to these cues and acting on them as they occur can help make settling easier. After seeing the first tired signs parents should start planning for settling eg change nappy and have some quiet time in a non-stimulating environment to relax the child, have a cuddle in the child's room then settle child on their back in the cot. This can be implemented from birth in fact it is better to start as early as possible.

Q. Do you ever suggest keeping a sleep diary? If so, what does this achieve?

A. We don't recommend sleep diaries.

Q. Do you have any tips for reducing feeding to sleep for babies who can only go to sleep on the breast/bottle?

A. We implement the feed, play, sleep cycle to separate feeding from sleeping. If you ensure the baby has a good feed and does not snack regularly the parent can be assured that the child does not need a snack prior to sleep, and a baby sleeps better if the feed has had time to settle prior to being put to bed.

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Q. You mentioned responsive settling, can you explain what this is?

A. Responsive settling is listening to the cues of the infant and understanding what the cues mean. Responsive settling supports flexibility in the parent's interventions with their child. There are no time limits, the parent responds to their child. Listening to their child's communication whether it is grizzling, crying, continued chatter or even lying quietly encourages parents to respond appropriately.

Q. Do you have any tips around helping parents to do what works for them and their families, not comparing their babies to other babies. How do you encourage this?

A. Parents need to understand that all babies are different and that they need to listen to and understand their own baby and enjoy them at this wonderful time.

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