

26. Understand your baby's sleeping and waking

How can you tell when your baby wants to be awake and when he wants to go to bed?

Is he quiet when he sleeps?

Does he make little noises?

Do the noises mean he wants to get up or will he go back to sleep?

How can you tell when he is ready to get up?



Your baby eats and sleeps best if you do what he wants.

Let him sleep until he wakes up on his own. He will keep eyes open and maybe fuss a bit. Pick him up, change his diaper, and talk with him. He will wake up, get ready to eat, and then you can feed him. Help him stay awake but not get upset while he eats by looking, talking, and stroking. Let him stay awake after he eats, then put him to bed when he gets sleepy.

Here are your baby's sleep and awake states and what to do when he is in each state.

Quiet sleep: He lies still and breathes deeply and evenly.

What to do: Let him sleep. He is fast asleep and will sleep for a while.

Active sleep: He moves around, makes sounds, breathes fast or slowly.

What to do: Wait to see what happens. He might wake up, or he might go back to quiet sleep again.

Drowsy after sleeping: His eyes are open, but he looks sleepy. He fusses a little.

What to do: Wait a bit. If he keeps his eyes open or keeps fussing, get him up. Hold him. Take care of him. Talk with him.

Wide awake & calm: His eyes are wide open, he looks bright and feels relaxed.

What to do: Feed him. He will eat best when he is awake and calm. While you feed, help him stay awake and calm. Look at him. Talk to him and stroke him in a way he likes. After you feed, talk and play a while. Give him something he likes to look at.

Drowsy after eating and playing: He looks sleepy and is relaxed.

What to do: Put him to bed and let him put himself to sleep. He may fuss a little, but not much.

Upset and fussy: He feels stiff and looks unhappy.

What to do: Comfort him. Help him calm down. Feed him if he wants to eat. He may be so stirred up or tired that he has to fuss himself to sleep. You are learning. Next time feed him when he is calm and alert. Put him down to sleep when he is drowsy.