

## **Read Your Baby's Sleepy Signals**

from *The No-Cry Sleep Solution* (McGraw-Hill) by Elizabeth Pantley

A good way to encourage good sleep is to get familiar with your baby's sleepy signals, and put her down to sleep as soon as she seems tired. A baby cannot put herself to sleep, nor can she understand her own sleepy signs.

A baby who is encouraged to stay awake when her body is craving sleep is typically an unhappy, fussy baby. Over time, the pattern develops into sleep deprivation, which further complicates and interferes with your baby's developing sleep maturity.

Pia, mother of eight-month-old Carrson talks about this problem, "I discovered that I had been putting Carrson to bed purely by the clock, not at all by his tiredness. Once I changed this dynamic and began identifying his sleepy signals he fell asleep easier and slept longer."

### **Watch the clock, too!**

Most newborns can only handle one or two hours of wakefulness at a time. A three-month-old gets tired after two to three hours of awake time. A one-year-old can be cheerful for about three to four hours, and a two-year-old about five to six hours. Once your child has passed his happy wakefulness stage he'll quickly become overtired. He'll then be easily overstimulated and find it harder to fall asleep and stay asleep.

### **Find that magic moment**

Using the clock as a guide, and your child's sleepy signals as indicators, you can find the magic moment when your baby is tired, but not overtired. When you witness those signs it's a quick but calm trip right to bed – don't launch into a prolonged pre-bed routine since your child may then get a second wind!

### **Typical sleepy signals**

Every child is unique and has his own sleepy signs, and you can watch and learn these. Your child may demonstrate one or more of these signs that tell you he is tired and ready to sleep - *now*:

- reducing his level of movement and activity
- becoming more quiet
- losing interest in people, toys and playtime
- rubbing his eyes
- looking glazed or unfocused
- having a more relaxed jaw, chin and mouth (droopy looking)
- becoming whiny and cranky
- fussing or crying
- losing patience or having tantrums
- yawning

- lying down or slumping in his seat
- watching television or a movie with a blank expression
- caressing a lovey or blanket
- asking for a pacifier, bottle or to nurse

Your child may demonstrate one or two of these sleepy signs, or even something entirely different. The signs may change at each stage of development. The key is to watch your child and encourage him to go to sleep when he is tired.

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