

Parent Wellbeing Tip Sheet



Sleep

Newborn babies do not have an established day-night cycle. They will not sleep through the night, like adults do. A newborn baby will usually sleep around 16 hours in a 24 hour timespan. This will be broken down into intervals that can last anywhere between 20 minutes to 5 hours. It usually takes between 6 and 14 weeks for babies to develop a day and night rhythm. Until this happens, you will find your baby will wake often during the night and cry.

Having your sleep interrupted every night for weeks and months can be difficult to manage. It is very important that you get enough sleep, especially if you are working or considering returning to work. When sleep is impaired your mood can be irritable and your performance reduced.

These are some simple tips to follow:

- Establish clear times that friends and family can come and visit you, and schedule yourself time to rest.
- Take daytime naps; they are not as restorative as night-time sleep, but they do help.
- Remember that less than five hours sleep a night for a week will cause you to feel exhausted, stressed and grumpy.
- Try to go to your bedroom when you feel tired and switch off the light. Don't just fall asleep in front of the TV.
- Try to cut out stimulants like nicotine and caffeine – that includes coffee, tea, soft drinks, and chocolate.
- Stay hydrated by drinking around eight glasses of water every day; dehydration can increase the effects of tiredness.
- Wind down and relax before going to bed, you can try stretching, breathing exercises, taking a shower or bath, or drinking herbal tea.
- Ask your family and friends to help look after your baby whilst you are having a nap, or help prepare some dinner and put the washing out.
- Catch up on missed sleep by sleeping more on the weekend.
- Share the work with your partner; taking turns for night duties can really make a difference.