**Sleep and Your Baby - What's Normal?**

Getting baby to sleep is a notoriously difficult problem for parents. But part of this difficulty may be a misunderstanding of how babies sleep and why. They are not born with adult sleep patterns in place!

So what sleep patterns do babies have? For one thing, babies go from deep to light sleep just like adults do; but during the light sleep phase, babies tend to wake - especially if there is a need such as hunger or cold - before entering into deep sleep again.

While it's very important to remember that every baby is different, here are some generalized facts about baby sleep patterns according to age.

**Birth to 6-8 Weeks**

At birth, babies generally sleep from 16 to 18 hours a 24-hour day, waking every few hours around the clock. A newborn baby has spent its whole life inside your womb, and their entire environment has been disrupted. Babies have no frame of reference, either, and don't understand why things have abruptly changed. Keeping this in mind can help sleep-deprived parents hang in there and not get too frustrated with their baby's wakefulness.

**8 Weeks to 6 Months**

During this time, infants are just beginning to develop their own circadian rhythm. It's still not fully developed, and sources point out that, even at 6 months, that rhythm may not be mature. During this age, 16 hours of sleep per 24 hours is still considered normal.

**6 Months to 1 Year**

During this stage, your baby will probably start sleeping for longer periods at a time, perhaps 4 to 6 hours at first, then up to 10 hours at the age of 1 year.

**Things That May Affect Baby's Sleep**

As your baby grows, multiple factors can come into play to upset the apple cart, so to speak. Parents sometimes complain that as soon as they get a good sleep routine established, it changes. Because babies are developing rapidly, there are some things to consider that affect baby's sleep.

\* **Growth spurts** - These can occur at various times. In the early weeks and months, growth tends to be most intense between 7 to 10 days after birth, again around 3 weeks old, then again at 3 and 4 months old. Growth spurts may raise the need for sleep (growing babies need to conserve energy), but growing also increases the need for nutrition, which means baby will be wanting to nurse or bottlefeed more often.

\* **Teething** - Teething can cause a lot of pain and stress for babies, making for restless sleep. Taking this into consideration, parents may be less worried about their baby's sudden inability to sleep and restless crying.

**Why It's Important for Baby to Get Enough Sleep**

It's not just for your sake that your baby needs to sleep! As noted above, babies need sleep to grow properly. Mental alertness is vital for babies to learn and develop, and behavior can be negatively affected by lack of sleep.