

MY DOULA DAWN



Nurturing Your Journey

Dawn Thompson
DONA-Certified Doula
23+ Years · Mother of Six

A GUIDE FROM MY DOULA DAWN

The Baby Sleep Cheat Sheet

What to Expect & How to Get More Rest

Newborn sleep is nothing like adult sleep — and that's why it feels so exhausting. The good news? Once you understand how baby sleep actually works, you can make small changes that lead to more rest for everyone.

THIS CHEAT SHEET WILL HELP YOU

- ✦ Understand newborn sleep cycles, and why they wake so often
- ✦ Avoid common sleep mistakes that make nights harder
- ✦ Get better rest — without sleep training

THE BASICS

The Truth About Newborn Sleep (What No One Tells You)

✦ NEWBORNS SLEEP A LOT — BUT IN SHORT BURSTS

Per 24 hours	14–17 hours total
Longest night stretch	2–4 hours, if you're lucky
Nap length	30 minutes to 2 hours

✦ NEWBORN SLEEP IS DIFFERENT BECAUSE

- ✦ Their sleep cycles are shorter — only 40–50 minutes.
- ✦ They wake easily because light sleep dominates. This is protective!
- ✦ Their circadian rhythm isn't developed yet — they don't know day from night.

✦ WAKE WINDOWS: AVOIDING AN OVERTIRED BABY

Newborns can't stay awake for long. If they do, they become overtired — and sleep gets worse.

0–4 weeks	35–45 minutes
4–8 weeks	45–60 minutes
8–12 weeks	60–75 minutes

✦ **Signs baby is overtired:** fussy or irritable after feeding, rubbing eyes or pulling ears, or a sudden "wired" burst of energy that fights sleep. If you see these, soothe with motion — rocking, bouncing, babywearing — to help baby settle.



COMMON QUESTIONS

Why Does My Baby Only Nap for 30 Minutes?

Short naps are normal in newborns — but if baby is waking miserable, they may need help connecting sleep cycles.

✦ HOW TO HELP BABY NAP LONGER

- ☐ Try contact naps — babies sleep longer when held
- ☐ Use white noise to block out sudden noises
- ☐ Keep the room dark — blackout curtains help
- ☐ Extend the nap by gently rocking baby back to sleep

Not all short naps need fixing — if baby wakes happy, they got enough sleep.

✦ WHEN WILL BABY SLEEP LONGER AT NIGHT?

6–8 weeks	Night sleep starts getting longer
By 3 months	Many babies get a 4–6 hour stretch
6–12 months	Full "sleeping through the night" (8+ hrs) is typical

✦ **Dawn's Tip:** Most babies won't sleep through the night until at least 3–6 months. To encourage longer stretches: expose baby to daylight during the day, keep nighttime feedings quiet and low-stimulation, and keep daytime naps consistent without letting baby oversleep.

SAFETY FIRST

Safe Sleep Guidelines

Even if you don't plan to co-sleep, knowing safe bed-sharing guidelines can be helpful in case baby won't sleep alone.

♦ THE BASICS OF SAFE SLEEP

- ☐ Baby sleeps on their back
- ☐ Firm, flat mattress — no pillows or bumpers
- ☐ Nothing in the crib but baby — no blankets, toys, or loose items
- ☐ Room-sharing is recommended for at least 6 months

♦ IF YOU'RE PLANNING TO CO-SLEEP (KNOW THE RISKS & GUIDELINES)

- ☐ Baby should be on a firm mattress, not a couch or chair
- ☐ No heavy blankets or pillows near baby
- ☐ Parents should be non-smokers & sober
- ☐ Breastfeeding mothers naturally sleep more in sync with baby

♦ **Dawn's Tip:** Safe sleep guidance isn't about scaring you — it's about giving you options that work for your family while keeping baby as safe as possible.



AVOID THESE

The Biggest Newborn Sleep Mistakes to Avoid

- ✦ Keeping baby awake too long — the "tire them out" strategy backfires.
- ✦ Not watching baby's sleepy cues — waiting too long to put them down.
- ✦ Thinking you can "spoil" baby by holding them too much.
- ✦ Expecting a newborn to sleep like an older baby.

✦ **Dawn's Tip:** Go with the flow, follow wake windows, and adjust your expectations. Your baby is still figuring things out, and so are you.

Want a real plan, not just tips? *The Newborn Sleep Blueprint* walks you through Dawn's feeding-based sleep method and the Intermission Technique, step by step.

Get it at mydouladawn.com/newbornsleep