

Why won't my baby sleep?



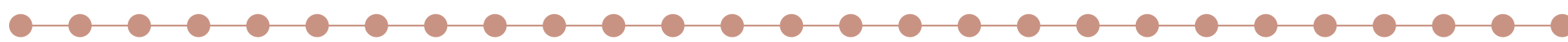
UNDERSTANDING AND NAVIGATING

SLEEP REGRESSIONS

CUDDLES & CARE

“Every sleep regression is actually a progression in your child’s development.”

INTRODUCTION



Each sleep regression really means your child has reached a new developmental milestone that they need to learn. Once your child's body adapts to the new change and learns how to deal with it, sleep will usually go back to normal.

The hard part is being able to identify what the sleep issue is, why it's happening, and then how to deal with it. If you can put those three things together, you'll have the tools you need to ride out the sleep storm.

It may take some work and a whole lot of patience, but I promise you there is relief on the other side!

This guide goes through the when, how, and why of each regression, giving you the knowledge to meet each regression head-on and work through it.



THE 4 MONTH REGRESSION

Why it's the one most talked about...

Of all the sleep regressions, the four month regression is the one people talk about the most.

Why? It's the first one your child will go through and it's also the most disruptive.

At 16 weeks (4 months) after birth, your baby's sleep cycles will go from 2 to 4, essentially starting to mimic the same sleep cycles we have as adults.

Before the 16 week mark:

When babies are born, their sleep cycles are very simple: They go through 50% non-REM sleep and then 50% REM sleep every time they sleep.

There's no going in and out of multiple sleep cycles, and once they hit their REM cycle, they can pretty much sleep through anything!

Once babies reach 16 weeks from their due date (this is an important piece of information if your baby was premature and uses corrected age), their sleep goes from a simple back and forth between non-REM and REM to suddenly having to go through all four stages of sleep that adults do.

They now go from awake to light sleep, to deep sleep, and then to REM sleep.

Their bodies aren't always capable of tying all the sleep cycles together and simply sleeping through, so they wake each time they come in and out of a stage, resulting in multiple wake-ups throughout the night.

How to help:

This is the perfect time for sleep training to be introduced. After 16 weeks of age, babies are at a developmental point where they can learn the skill of independent sleep and connect their sleep cycles.

Sleep training isn't a one-size-fits-all solution, and you need to find the best method that works for your family. I usually suggest waiting at least 2 weeks from when you start to see signs of sleep regression, just to give your baby's body some time to adjust before introducing something new.

Fun Fact

The four-month regression is the only regression that never actually ends! Unlike others that are closely connected to certain milestones, this one is all about physical change in their sleep. There's no magic time when your baby's sleep will suddenly recover. Babies will need to gently learn how to connect their sleep cycles so they can stay asleep and not wake up each time they transition to a new stage.



THE 8 MONTH REGRESSION

This regression is caused by both physical and cognitive milestones.

Physical milestones include crawling, sitting up, and learning to pull up to a standing position.

Cognitive milestones include:

- **Object Permanence**
- **Separation Anxiety**

THE 8 MONTH REGRESSION

Object Permanence

Object permanence is being able to understand that an object or person still exists, even when they are hidden and you can't see or hear them.

Until this point in their lives, babies were operating under "out of sight, out of mind." If they couldn't see or hear you, they simply thought you were gone, even if you were actually close by.

Separation Anxiety

As babies become more aware of their surroundings and the people in their circle, they will start to really recognize and trust the people they see the most. Unfamiliar faces or new situations can make them feel unsafe or upset, and you might start to find that your little one gets very worked up when you're not around.

A Few Tips to Navigate Separation Anxiety

1. Practice short separations by leaving your baby with someone they know well.

2. Leave something comforting with your baby

3. Make saying goodbye a positive time

4. Make a point to always come say hi once you're home, so they begin to understand that when you say goodbye, you always come back!

Noticing the signs and how to help:

SIGNS:

- Multiple night wakings when previously sleeping longer stretches
- Shorter naps during the day
- Early morning rising

HOW TO HELP:

- Stay true to the healthy sleep habits already established.
- Adjust naps and bedtime as needed, until their sleep returns.
- Offer lots of time to practice their new skill
- Maintain age-appropriate wake windows
- Ride it out before determining if they are ready to drop their 3rd nap. Most times they will continue with that nap once the regression subsides.



THE 12 MONTH REGRESSION

This sleep regression is caused by milestones such as learning to walk and a sudden expansion in a child's vocabulary. All of these milestones are huge and can have a big impact on sleep.

Noticing the signs:

The second nap of the day is the most affected and can lead to false signs of needing to drop to 1 nap.

How to help:

- Keep your little one on a 2 nap schedule and adjust bedtime as needed, to make up the daily sleep deficit.
 - Give your baby lots of time to practice their new skills! Once the novelty wears off and their brain adjusts to all the new things that are happening, their sleep will return to normal.
 - Maintain a strong bedtime routine
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THE 18 MONTH REGRESSION

This sleep regressions continues to be caused by the rapid expansion of your toddler's language and speech development!

Noticing the signs:

- A struggle getting them to bed
- Prolonged night waking
- Very early rising

How to help:

- Implement a strong bedtime routine
 - Maintain your current nap routine - adjusting as needed for any daily sleep deficit.
 - Create a sleep friendly environment for naps and bedtime.
 - Provide lots of active play during the day, as this can help with better sleep at night.
 - Wait it out before determining if they are ready to drop their second nap.
 - Stay true to all healthy sleep habits that have developed. Stay strong - this too shall pass!
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THE 24 MONTH REGRESSION

This sleep regression is caused by multiple cognitive milestones for your toddler. They are speaking more, becoming more independent, and are able to follow simple instructions better and do simple tasks on their own.

All of those new things translate to lots of new brain connections being established, and their bodies are in a constant state of learning.

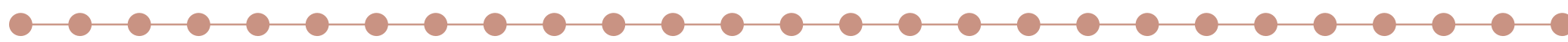
Noticing the signs:

- A struggle getting them to bed
- Prolonged night waking
- Protested Naps

How to help:

- Continue to offer naps, as this doesn't necessarily mean your toddler is ready to drop their nap altogether. The naps might not be 100% consistent throughout the regressions, but more often than not their body still needs that extra rest! Once the regressions has passed, naps will continue as normal.
 - If they are waking earlier than usual, encourage them to quietly stay in their room and play until it's time to wake up. A "wake clock" could be introduced at this point if you feel your child is ready for it.
 - Keep nighttime interactions minimal and reinforce healthy sleep habits. Use positive reinforcement to get your little one back to bed and sleeping.
 - Avoid things like turning on the lights, music etc. during night waking, as they can be very stimulative and disrupt their sleep even more.
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FINAL NOTES



Your child will be going through lots of big changes throughout year 1 and 2. From learning to walk to learning to speak, you will notice changes left and right during this time.

Each new milestone can disrupt your little one's sleep, as their brain and body adjust to the new thing they are learning.

Sometimes it might feel like they're showing signs they are ready to drop a nap or simply not wanting to sleep anymore. This could be the case, but most likely it's not! If you give your child some room to master their new milestone by providing them with lots of practice and stimulation throughout the day, don't be surprised when all of a sudden they go back to being the super sleeper they've learned to be at this point.

The best thing you can do is hold tight to your child's healthy sleep habits and help them through the bumps.

I hope this guide has helped
provide a better
understanding of what's
happening through each
sleep regression, and
practical ways to help your
child through it.

Please remember: this
information simply provides
guidelines that you can refer
to and adapt as needed.

Cheering For You, Always



Jessica

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