



Nap Transitions

A step by step
process to
navigate and help
your child as they
outgrow naps.

AGES 4 MONTHS – 3 YEARS

CUDDLES & CARE

“With practical tips, guidelines and insights into your child’s evolving sleep patterns, you’ll feel confident managing each transition with ease.”

Jessica



NEWBORN – 3 NAP SCHEDULE

By approximately 16 weeks of age (adjusted for prematurity), most babies are ready to move onto a nap schedule. While your baby was likely taking anywhere from 4 to 6 or more naps in those early months, they are now ready to scale down to just 3.

It can take some time for your baby's circadian rhythm to sync with the new schedule, but with consistency and patience, they can absolutely get there.

Between 4 and 9 months, babies thrive on a 3-nap schedule: one in the morning, one around midday, and a short catnap in the afternoon to bridge the gap to bedtime.

A Few Things to Know About Each Nap

1. Nap 1 aids in mental development. Nap 2 aids in physical development.

2. Both need to be a minimum of 1 hour to be considered restorative.

3. Nap 1 should be capped by 11 AM to protect the second nap. Naps 1 and 2 should be capped at 2 hours from the time your baby falls asleep.

4. The exception to rule #3: If the previous nap was under one hour, the next nap can be extended to 2.5 hours.

5. Naps 1 & 2 should happen in the crib as much as possible. Nap 3 can be on the go, as it's just a catnap to bridge between nap 2 and bedtime.

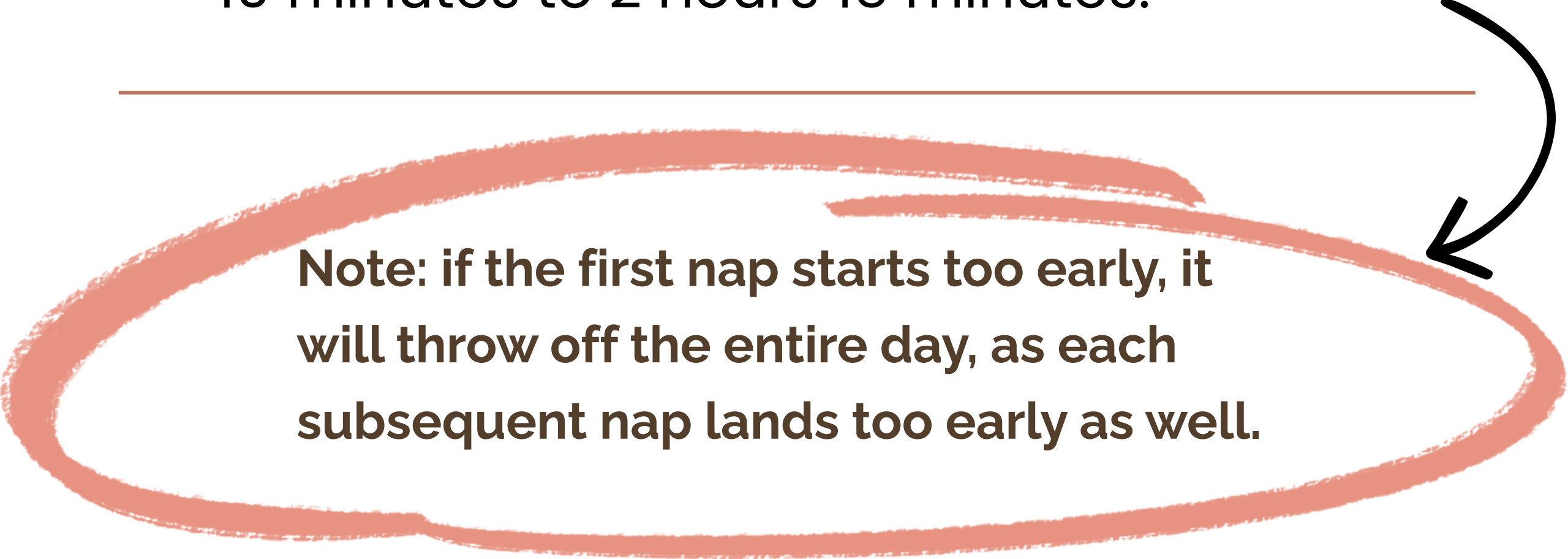
Awake Window Guidelines

- If nap 1 or 2 is less than 1 hour or skipped entirely, the following awake window should be 1 hour 45 minutes to 2 hours.
- In this case, nap 2 should not start before 11:30 AM and nap 3 should not start before 2:30 PM.

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- If nap 1 or 2 is exactly 1 hour, the following awake window should be 2 hours to 2 hours and 15 minutes.

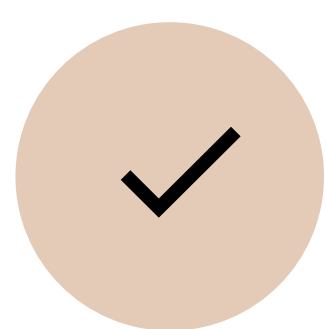
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- If nap 1 or 2 is longer than 1 hour, the following awake window should be 2 hours 10 minutes to 2 hours 15 minutes.

Note: if the first nap starts too early, it will throw off the entire day, as each subsequent nap lands too early as well.

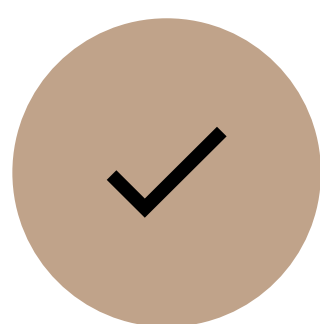


The first nap of the day is essentially a continuation of overnight sleep. Even if your baby has only been awake since 7:00 or 7:30 AM, they will typically be ready to go back down by 9:00 AM.

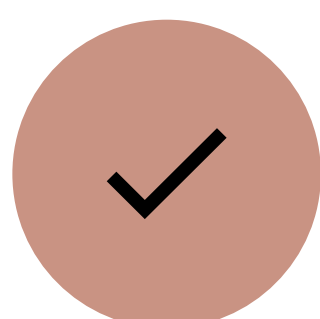
Sample 3 nap schedule:



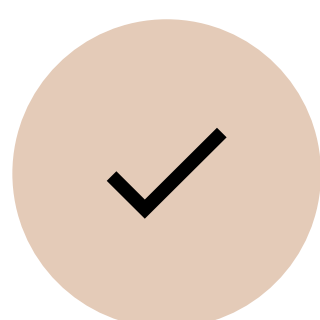
7:00 - 7:30 am. Wake and feed



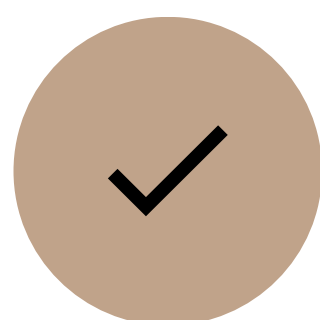
Nap 1: Start between 8:30 - 9:00 am



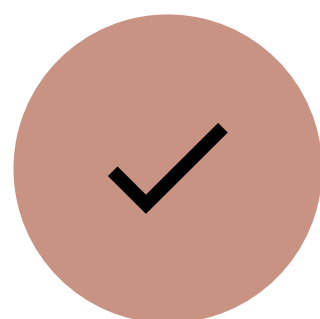
Wake, feed and play



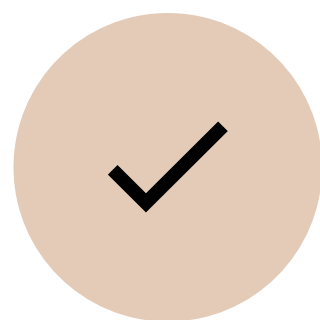
Nap 2: Start between 11:30 am - 1:00pm



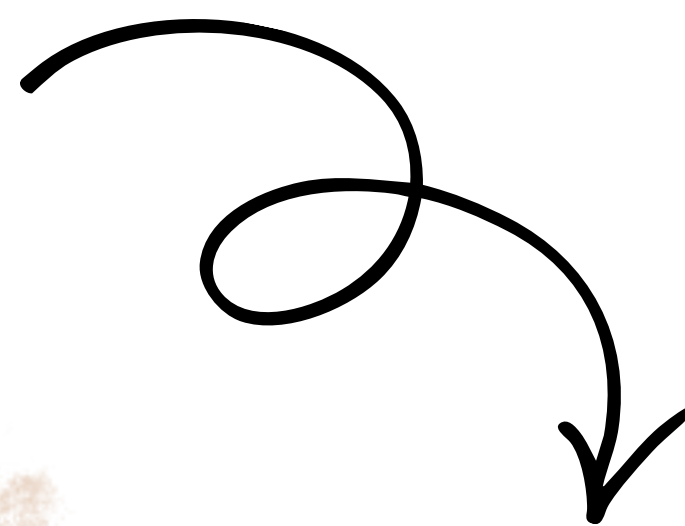
Wake, feed and play



Nap 3: start between: 2:30pm - 4:15 pm



Goal bedtime: 7:00pm



Your baby's exact nap time will be determined by what time they were up for the day, and the length of the previous nap.



3 - 2 NAP TRANSITION

This transition usually happens between 7 and 9 months of age.

The following are signs your child may display, signaling they are ready to drop to 2 naps:

- **Skipping the third nap more often than taking it**
- **Tolerating longer awake windows between naps 1 and 2**
- **Shorter naps than usual**
- **Earlier than usual morning wake-ups**

How to Transition:

- At the beginning, you will want to adjust with an earlier bedtime (between 5:45 PM – 6:15 PM). It will take your little one some time to get adjusted to the longer wake window between their second nap and bedtime.
- Every 3 to 5 nights, shift bedtime later by 15 minutes, working toward a 4 – 4.5 hour wake window after nap 2.

Nap Guidelines

Nap #1:

- Should start **no earlier than 8:30 am and no later than 9 am**. Night sleep should be capped at 7:30 am to protect the timing of the first nap.
 - **This nap should be capped at 2 hours of actual sleep or 11 am** (whichever comes first). This is to protect the timing of their second nap.
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Nap #2:

- Should start no earlier than 12 PM and no later than 1 PM.
- **Cap this nap at 2 hours of actual sleep or by 3:30 PM** (whichever comes first). This is to protect bedtime.

If your baby is learning new physical milestones, this nap will most likely be the one thrown off until the novelty of the milestone fades.

Exceptions to the rules:

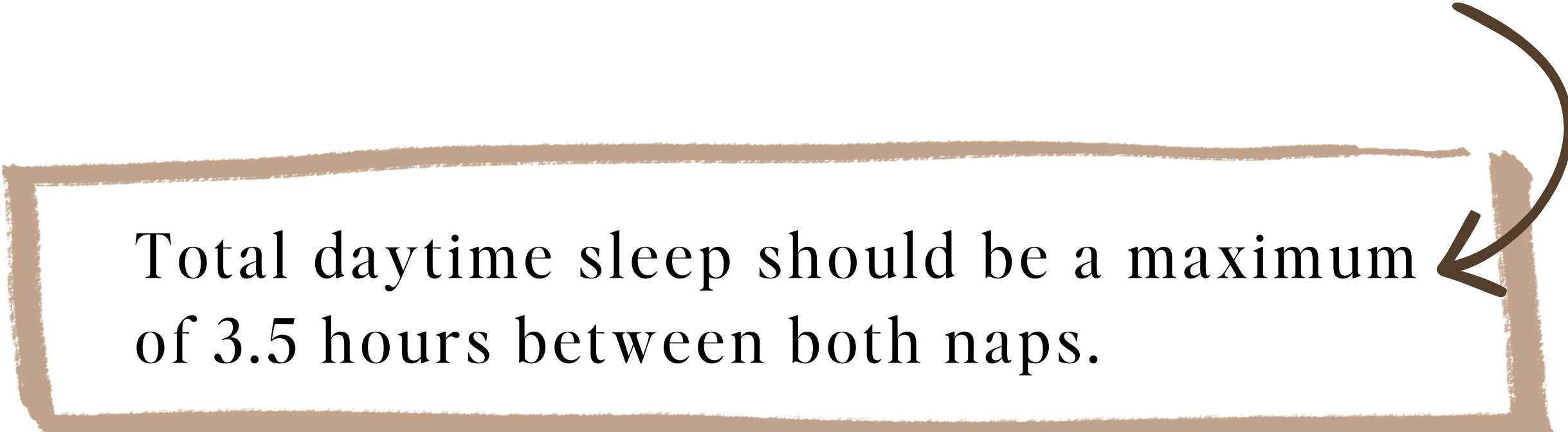
If their first nap was 2 hours, cap the second nap at 1.5 hours, for a daily total of 3.5 hours of sleep.

If their first nap is less than 1 hour, the second nap can extend to 2.5 hours (max), for a daily total of 3.5 hours of sleep.

If your baby skips their first nap, the second nap still shouldn't start until 12 PM. It will be tough getting them there, but it will ensure their sleep is the most restorative, as well as bridge the time between that nap and bedtime.

Nap Cut off Times:

- If goal bedtime is 6:30/7: Cap second nap by 3/3:15 pm
- If goal bedtime is 7:15/7:30: Cap second nap by 3:15/3:30



Total daytime sleep should be a maximum of 3.5 hours between both naps.



2 - 1 NAP TRANSITION

This transition usually happens between 14 and 19 months, and it's very rare for a toddler to be ready to drop their nap earlier than this. The closer to 19 months a child transitions, the easier it will be. You will want your child on a 1-nap schedule by 19 months at the latest, or the extra daytime sleep will begin to interfere with bedtime and their ability to sleep properly at night.

Signs they are ready to transition:

- **One or both naps shorten**
- **Nap resistance, skipping, or delayed sleep for 1-2+ weeks**
- **Difficulty falling asleep at night or early rising**

2 - 1 NAP TRANSITION

Things to note: If your toddler has experienced a new milestone that has correlating timing with these signs, wait 1 or 2 weeks to see if their sleep goes back to normal on its own once the novelty of the milestone has worn off. If the signs persist, then it's probably time to drop their nap!

How to keep the 2-nap schedule (if needed):

- Cap the first nap at 1 hour max, as this will create extra sleep pressure going into the second nap.
- After a few days, you can slowly start eliminating time off the first nap until it's down to only 45 minutes, creating even more sleep pressure for nap 2.

How to Transition:

A normal timeline for this transition is 4 – 6 weeks, so please be patient with your little one as they adjust!

- During weeks 1 and 2 of the transition, their first nap can start as early as 11:30 AM if needed. The ideal wake window for that nap is 5.5 hours after they wake up.
- Every 3 to 7 days, push their nap by 15 minutes. By the end of week 2, their nap should be happening no earlier than 12 PM.
- While transitioning, you can temporarily adjust with an earlier bedtime. Once they have fully transitioned and their nap is a minimum of 90 minutes, they can go back to having a 7:00 or 7:30 bedtime.

- The ideal wake window between their nap and bedtime is 4 – 5 hours.
- You can continue bumping their nap until it lands at 12:30/1pm
- For the first few weeks of the transition they can sleep until 8 am if they need the extra sleep; making sure they are down for their nap by 12:30/1pm.

Potential Bumps Along The Way:

It's normal for naps to be on the shorter end (around 1 hour) throughout the transition process. As their body adjusts to the longer awake window, you should see their nap going back to a minimum of 90 minutes in length and all the way to 3 hours (max) once they have finally adjusted.

You may also find that they are waking earlier than normal due to going down overtired at bedtime. You will want to make sure not to take them out of their crib earlier than 6:30 AM. As you continue to slowly push their nap and bedtime, you should start to see an improvement in their wake time.

SAMPLE 1 NAP SCHEDULE

- WAKE UP BETWEEN 6:30 - 7:30 AM
- NAP STARTS BETWEEN 12:30/1:00 PM , LASTING A MAXIMUM OF 3 HOURS
- BEDTIME BETWEEN 7 - 7:30 PM



1 - 0 NAP TRANSITION

This transition usually happens between 3 - 5 years of age, and it's very rare for a toddler to drop their nap before the age of 3.

Signs they are ready to drop their nap:

- They have a hard time falling asleep at naptime
- They also have a hard time falling asleep at bedtime
- They protest or skip their nap altogether, on a consistent basis for a few weeks.
- They don't show signs of tiredness on the days they skip their nap

1 - 0 NAP TRANSITION

Completely dropping their nap is a HUGE milestone for your toddler, and you should be proud of them! Although they won't be napping anymore, you can still offer quiet time in the afternoon. They can play, color, paint, draw, or do whatever they would like to do.

They are still little, and life can still feel very stimulating for them. Giving them a quiet space throughout their day to simply be, can be very helpful.

I hope this guide leaves you feeling empowered and supported through every stage of your child's sleep journey.

Every baby is different and there's no one size fits all approach. This guide is simply a flexible reference you can use based on your child's unique sleep needs.

Checking For You, Always



Jessica

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