

COMMON SLEEP CRUTCHES

And how to break them!



A sleep crutch, sleep prop, or sleep association, is something that your child needs in order to help them fall asleep. In the early months, these are often necessary to soothe your child and help aid them to sleep. After that, many parents continue on with it because that's what is easiest and that's what works. And let's be real... sometimes for your own sanity, you need your baby to fall asleep and are willing to use what ever measure possible. However, when they are older and require these things to fall asleep, it becomes challenging. This is because when they inevitably wake up, they will be depending on their sleep crutch to get them back to sleep. I've been there- my first child took every single nap in the swing until about 10 weeks old. At the time, I didn't realize that I was creating a sleep crutch for her!



Common Sleep Crutches
(that aren't so great in the long run)

- nursing/ bottle feeding
- rocking
- pacifier
- motion- baby swing, rock n play
- being held

There are also some positive sleep associations which babies can learn to rely on for sleep, which don't really require much parental involvement.

- sound machine
- swaddle or sleep sack
- lovey, stuffed animal, or blankie if over 1 year old.
- finger/thumb sucking
- naptime/ bedtime routine

So how do you get rid of those sleep crutches? You stop offering it, which is easier said than done! You can cut any of these out cold turkey and some of them can be weaned.

- Rocking to sleep: You can do this as part of the naptime/ bedtime routine, but you want to make sure your child is drowsy but awake when you place them in their crib or bassinet. Your child will likely fuss when you set them in the crib because they like the motion. But give them a few minutes of crying to see if they will start to soothe. After that, you can go in and pat them on the back to see if that settles them. If needed, you can pick up your child for a minute of rocking, but then be sure to put them back into the crib while they are still awake.
- Feeding to sleep: Make sure your child is getting plenty to eat during the day. And give a good night time feeding during bed time routine. But make sure your baby is awake while feeding. Like with rocking to sleep- you want to make sure your child is awake but drowsy when you place them in their crib. They will likely protest at first. Give your baby a few minutes to see if they will work it out on their own. If not, you can go in and pat them on the back to see if that settles them. If needed, you can pick up your child for a minute of rocking, but then be sure to put them back into the crib while they are still awake.
- The pacifier: The paci is actually great in reducing the risk of SIDS and helping your little one to relax. Some babies wake up in the night without it and are fine. Some babies eventually learn how to replace the paci in their mouths themselves. What is not great, is when it comes out of your baby's mouth and they need it in order to fall back asleep. In that case, if you still want to use the paci, I recommend using it as part of a naptime/ bedtime routine to help relax your baby, but take it out of their mouth right before you lay them down. If you really want to keep the paci for sleep, practice with your baby during the day- put the paci in their hand and guide their hand to their mouth, so that they can learn to do it themselves during bedtime.



- Motion, such as with a swing: This is very common for naps. There are a couple of ways that you can transition. First, you can keep some naps in the swing, while practicing one nap a day in your baby's crib. Or you can do a slower transition- you can reduce the speed of the swing every other day, until they are sleeping in it without any motion. At which point you can start trying naps in their crib or bassinet. Have plenty of play time in their sleep space so that they can get used to being in it.

A good time to start this process is around 3-4 months. Again, you can wean or cut it out cold turkey depending on how you think your child will respond best. When your baby is no longer using their sleep crutch, introducing those positive sleep associations will be very helpful! It will take some patience while your child is adjusting, but putting fourth this effort now will help in the process of teaching your baby independent sleep. The goal is that when you place your child in the crib awake, they will be able to put themselves to sleep on their own. This is when its so helpful to have a sleep plan in place.



If you need help setting a plan into action, that's what I'm here for! Let me help you get your babies all tucked in tight!

Go to
www.alltuckedintight.com or
visit this link to schedule a
free 15 minute discovery call if
you have questions:
<https://alltuckedintightdiscoverycall.as.me/>

