

Health

Lullabies, spoonfuls of syrup and late-night activities – parents will try anything to secure a decent night’s rest. But as one child sleep expert reveals, such intervention usually does more harm than good. So then, just what is the secret to...

Sweet dreams?



Wide awake: Isabel likes to play at bedtime

DAY 8
7am: I do wake-up duties.
8pm: I put her down, less than 10 minutes after she has fallen asleep. She wakes up, crying, falls asleep by 8.30pm, wakes a little under two hours later.
9pm: I put her down, she is almost asleep when Gemma and Hector return home. The commotion downstairs wakes her up. There follows an hour of intense crying and upset. She is crying at her gums quite a bit, which are red and swollen, so I give her paracetamol. It is another half an hour before she finally settles. This is the most upset I've seen her since the commotion with Lucy began. Words exchanged with my wife.
DAY 9
7am: I wake her.
8.30pm: I put her down, asleep by 8.15pm, wakes 2.45pm.
9pm: Gemma puts her down, quite easily and she is asleep by 7pm.
DAY 10
7am: Isabel wakes herself and I get up with her.
8.30pm: I put her down and she is asleep in less than ten minutes – the best nap-time yet. She wakes up at 2.30pm. Tonight the chair goes out of the room.
8.50pm: Gemma puts her down, it's easy and she doesn't fall asleep until 8.10pm after lots of crying.

DAY 11
7.40am: We all wake.
12.20pm: I put her down, she is asleep by 12.55pm. She wakes at 3pm.
6.30pm: Gemma is on duty. It takes a while but Isabel is asleep by 7.40pm.
DAY 12
6am: Isabel wakes, I settle her.
7am: She wakes again.
 Lucy is impressed we can get her to go back to sleep at 6am for another hour, nipping an early waking habit in the bud. It shows we're getting the hang of it, she says.
12.30pm: I put her down, 15 minutes later, I have to change her dirty nappy and she is asleep seven or eight minutes later by 1pm. Wakes at 3pm.
7pm: I am away for the night so Gemma puts her down. She wakes quite a lot during the night but Gemma settles her.
DAY 13
7.40am: Gemma wakes her.
12.30pm: Gemma puts her down, asleep by 1pm.
2.45pm: Isabel wakes.
7.30pm: I put her down, she's asleep within 15 minutes.
1am: She wakes but I settle her easily. Had expected a night of regular waking because the previous day was so unsettled.
DAY 14
7.30am: I wake her.
12.30pm: I put her down and she is

gone within minutes. She wakes up again at around 3pm.
7.10pm: I put her down, she's asleep within 20 minutes. I feel fantastic!
DAY 15
7.30am: I wake her.
12.30pm: I put her down and she is asleep by 12.45pm. She wakes at 2.25pm – she has slept for less than two hours.
7pm: Gemma puts her down and thinks she's asleep after 20 minutes but Isabel wakes up fully and doesn't go to sleep until 7.50pm.
4am: She wakes. I change her nappy and put her down.
5am: Isabel wakes again. I go in to her, settling her every 10 minutes until she falls asleep properly at 6.30am. We knew this would happen because she didn't sleep much on the previous day.
DAY 16
7.30am: I wake her up.
12.30pm: She is asleep by 12.40pm and wakes herself at 2.50pm.
7pm: I put her down and she is asleep within 20 minutes. Poor Hector, who normally shares the room with Isabel, has been sleeping in our bed but now decides he wants to return to his own room.
DAY 17
7.30am: I wake her.
12.10pm: She is asleep by 12.30pm and, once again, she wakes herself up at 2.50pm.
7.10pm: Gemma puts her down and she's asleep for 7.30pm.

DAY 18
7.30am: Gemma wakes her, we have our first pile-in – all four of us in our bed for 20 minutes before getting up. This is against Lucy's rules, but Isabel thinks it's great fun.
12.15pm: Asleep by 12.35pm, wakes herself at 2.55pm.
7pm: Gemma puts her down, she's asleep for 7.30pm.
DAY 19
7.30am: Gemma wakes her.
12.30pm: Gemma puts her down, she is asleep by 12.40pm, wakes herself at 2.35pm.
7.15pm: I put her down, she's asleep for 7.40pm.
 I am amazed to have reached this point. I hardly think of Isabel's much simplified sleeping routine now. I don't even need to sing to her any more.
DAY 20
7.15am: Isabel wakes.
12.20pm: I put her down, she is asleep by 12.40pm, I wake her at 3.10pm.
7.25pm: Gemma puts her down, she's asleep for 7.35pm.
 We are baby whisperers!
DAY 21
7.20am: Isabel wakes herself, we pick her up at 7.30am.
12.15pm: Gemma puts her down and she's asleep by 12.40pm, we wake her at 3.10pm.
7pm: I put her down and she's asleep for 7.20pm. And, yes, she sleeps right through the night once again.
 We raise a glass to Lucy!

MYTHS ABOUT BABIES AND SLEEP:

- If you keep your child up later in the evening, they will inevitably sleep later the following morning
- If they wake in the night they must be hungry or in pain
- My child doesn't take naps, so he or she must not need them
- Babies need almost total quiet to sleep properly – noise will disturb them
- When your baby grows older, his or her sleep problems will automatically disappear