

3 WATCH FOR NEW TIRED SIGNS

As your little one grows, new tired signs develop. "You can see and hear older babies make little sighs," says Karen. "That's the warm-up. Then they'll become distracted and get bored easily – your bub may be seeking out a new interest, such as a toy or going outside, but this will only last a minute and then he'll get wriggly or whingey and look for something else to stimulate him." When you notice your little's tired signs, it's time to get ready for snoozetime!

4 GET RITUALISTIC

"Three to four months is a time when you can encourage your baby to understand routines by making his pre-bedtime routine gentle and calming and quiet," says Dr Blunden. A consistent routine before bed can help your little understand that sleeptime is ahead, paving the way to peaceful slumber. It might include a feed followed by a warm bath, a soothing massage, getting into PJs then quiet singing or storytime. Adapt it to what your baby responds to well, Dr Blunden advises, and be patient, as establishing a bedtime pattern won't always give instant results.

5 CREATE A BIT OF CALM

You'll want to keep the hour or so leading up to your bedtime ritual quiet and not too stimulating, as fizzing your baby up before bed can make it difficult for him to get to sleep, Dr Blunden says. This means putting away bright, noisy toys, encouraging older brothers and sisters to avoid raucous play and avoiding those tempting tickle fests!

6 WEAR BUB OUT

While keeping things subdued in the evenings, also ensure your baby gets plenty of stimulation during the day. A walk to the park where, depending on his age, bub can have some tummy time or a crawl, cruise or toddle, is one great way to ensure a nice, tired bubba at bedtime. "Regular physical activity and exposure to light promotes good sleep," says Dr Blunden.

7 SET THE BEST SLUMBER ENVIRONMENT

What worked for your newborn may no longer work for your older bub in terms of his sleep environment. While before white noise or a CD of gentle music may have calmed him down, now you might find it overstimulates him. "The only way you'll know is by trial and error," says Dr Blunden, who generally advocates dim light in the bedroom rather than pitch black and a temperature of between 19 and 21°C. "Remember, though, that what works for Baby A may not work for Baby B, depending on their temperaments."

8 BE PREPARED FOR DISRUPTIONS

Your baby will develop so rapidly in his first year and many of his physical and developmental milestones can affect sleep patterns. He may be so excited by his new ability to roll, crawl or stand that he'll want to practise it all night, for example, and "understanding, verbalising and even using his better eyesight can also disrupt sleep," Dr Blunden says. Separation anxiety is another notorious sleep disrupter. It typically develops around six to nine months and may mean your baby objects to being left by you in his bed.

To get through these milestones, sticking with your same routine is important, though you may need to tweak it a bit. "What you did prior to settle your child might not be working, but use the same basic guidelines to resettle him: 'Maybe I'll try music this time, or I'll hang around a bit more. Maybe I'll call from a distance so he'll know I'm there,'" Dr Blunden says. You might also need to step in to teach your baby new skills – if he's just learnt to pull himself up to standing, he may need help to learn to lie back down!

9 COPE WITH FEED/SLEEP ASSOCIATIONS

"It's very normal and natural for a young baby to fall asleep on the boob or the bottle, and you can't really help that," says Dr Blunden. "Developmentally, after six months bub doesn't need to be fed overnight, but it's rare that parents actually stop these feedings at six months." If your baby associates feeding with sleeping and this starts to become a problem, it's a matter of thinking of some new settling ideas. One is to feed bub until he's sleepy but not asleep, then switch to another settling method such as patting, rocking or singing until he's soothed to sleep.

Another option is to give a 'dream feed', where you rouse bub at 10:30 or 11pm for a final feed of the night. Dr Blunden believes that in a baby's first year, the first three hours of slumber are the deepest, so giving him a full tummy at the end of this time may be beneficial. "It may stop him from waking and expecting a feed, and it may also cover that light sleep period of the night," she says.

10 GO WITH YOUR GUT

There are families who swear by the strict routines advocated by sleep trainers and those who insist certain tricks will guarantee sleep for your bub, as it has for theirs. But if it doesn't sit right with you, remember you're the parent and it's your decision as to how to help your child to get sleep. "I encourage parents to listen to their heart," says Dr Blunden.

"Does your heart tell you to pick up your baby? Then pick up your baby. It doesn't mean in 10 years' time you'll still be picking him up. I believe that you need to think about right now. If it's going to work right now, then right now you need to do it."

It's also important to remember that all babies are different! While a feed, cuddles, dim light and a pat or rock might settle some little ones, it won't necessarily work for others. It's about figuring out what works best for your family and going with it. ★