

## **Early Morning Waking in Babies over 9 months**

By Natalie Ebrill

There are many reasons for your baby 9 months or older waking early in the morning around 5-6am and not wanting to go back to sleep. If the early waking is upsetting for your family and you would like to try and extend the morning wake time, we need to identify the possible causes of the early waking and deal with each issue.

### **Common issues to address are:**

- \*Too much light coming in the bedroom in the morning
- \*Household/environmental noises
- \*Baby not dressed warmly enough for the early morning temperatures
- \*The reward of an early breakfast
- \*Waking for a milk feed
- \*Habits and routine already established as a younger baby, of an early start to the day
- \*The timing of the first day sleep
- \*Your baby's bedtime in the evening
- \*Genetics! Your baby is made up of two parents

### **So once you decide what the possible causes are you can begin to implement with some solutions.**

- \*Any of the changes you make may take at least a week to have an effect on your baby's body clock, so I encourage you to be patient.
- \*It is easy to adjust the amount of light coming into the bedroom with appropriate window coverings of any sought. Whatever is handy will work, it doesn't have to be professional or expensive to be effective, just block out the light so that in the morning so your child's bedroom is 90% as dark as night time. Try an old quilt cover, dark sheet, large towels, a picnic blanket, rubber coated block out fabric hung up or thumb tacked into the timber around the window.

\*Sometimes we can train the family to be quiet around the house early in the morning, but outside factors also affect your baby's waking. Try playing soft relaxing sleep time music such as 'Music for Dreaming' on repeat all night to cover some of the noises and wean baby off the music in a few months.

\*Once crawling, babies are very mobile in the cot and should be dressed for the night assuming they are rolling around in the cot and not under the warm covers all night. Think how you would feel, sleeping in what you have dressed your baby in, if you were sleeping on top of your blankets without a partner. When your baby starts crawling in the cot they should sleep in a Sleeping Bag and only be tucked in with a sheet. Excess blankets become a SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) risk if your baby is mobile and crawling or rolling around the cot. Also remember to use my "sheet Trick"

\*If your baby is currently enjoying early morning milk feeds or gets breakfast as soon as they wake, this is a big reward for waking. If you are happy to offer these feeds, early mornings are a consequence unless you resettle back to sleep after the feed. If you don't think baby needs these feeds for nutrition and they are simply waking for them as a habit, you can drop them if baby is over nine months and eating solids well during the day. This is a personal decision.

\*Sometimes mum and dad need baby to get up early for the working schedule during the week but want to encourage a sleep in on the weekends. Unfortunately baby doesn't understand the difference between a workday and a weekend, so I recommend that you treat every day like a Sunday and encourage a sleep in until the last minute and arrange breakfast for baby at the place of babysitting or childcare.

\*If you reward your baby waking early in the morning with a sleep shortly after breakfast, you are encouraging early waking. Ask me about your child's age appropriate daily routine.

\*If you put your baby to bed too early in the evening, they will meet their sleep quota earlier in the night and not be able to sleep in to your reasonable wake time in the morning.

\*The last and obvious reason is that if you or your partner is an early riser, it is possible that the baby takes after that parent and will always grace you with their presence when they wake! After all, the baby is genetically related!

**Tip:** If your baby's routine is working for your baby and your family, don't change anything! If the routine needs fine tuning, first look for the possible contributing factors, then put a consistent plan in place confidently and monitor your results to see what works over 3-7 days.

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**Baby Sleep Consultant newborns-5 yrs**

RN, Child and Family Health Nurse. Mother of three.

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