

TIPS FOR SLEEP AND BEDTIME

Newborn to toddler

There are many ways you can support your child to go to sleep, and finding the strategy that best suits you and your family can be challenging. To move into sleep your child needs to feel safe, secure and relaxed plus be physically ready for sleep.

At Karitane, we use strategies which respond to your baby's cues.

If you are changing the way you settle your baby, allow a few days/weeks to adjust to the new strategy.

Remember:

- Be consistent
- If you have had enough, or your baby is becoming distressed, stop and calmly pick up your baby. Responding to your baby's cues will help them feel contained, safe and secure

It's really important that your child learns to feel safe and secure, so they can relax and move naturally into sleep.



For more information, refer to our "Understanding Sleep" brochure or our parenting website www.karitane.com.au. Be patient – change takes time, don't be afraid to seek help!

0 mth	3 mth	6 mth	9 mth	12 mth	15+ mth
Settling In Arms					
Hands-on Settling					
Comfort Settling					
Parental Presence					
Gradual Withdrawal					

Settling in Arms

Recommended for: 0 - 3 months and beyond

This strategy can be useful for young babies, or an older baby having difficulty settling.

- Cradle your baby in your arms, with or without gentle rocking, until your baby is calm. In the early days, you may need to hold your baby until they fall asleep
- Gently place your baby in their cot on their back.
- If your baby stirs or becomes upset when placed in the cot, stay with your baby and offer comfort until calm
- You can combine some of the Hands-on Settling suggestions below to support your baby to move into sleep
- If your baby becomes distressed pick up your baby and return to the first step

Hands-on Settling

Recommended for: 0 - 6 months and beyond

- Following quiet time and sleep routine (e.g. wrap, story, and cuddle) place your baby in their cot on their back
- Watch and respond to the cues your baby is giving you
- If your baby remains calm, allow your baby to settle on their own. If they start to cry, try any of the following to provide comfort and reassurance:
 - Gentle 'ssshhh' sounds
 - Pat gently and rhythmically, e.g. thigh, shoulder, tummy or pat the mattress
 - Talk quietly, using comforting tones, e.g. 'its ok', 'time for sleep'
 - Gently touch or stroke your baby's head, arm, or leg
 - Gently rock the cot in a slow, rhythmic movement to calm your baby.
 - If at any time you feel like you've had enough, or your baby is not calming, stop and use a different strategy such as 'Settling in Arms'

Comfort Settling

Recommended for: 6 months and beyond

Comfort settling is different to 'Hands-on' settling in that it allows some space for your baby to discover their own way of going to sleep.

- Quiet time and preparation for sleep routine (e.g. bath, wrap, story, and cuddle)
- Place your baby in the cot awake on their back
- If this is a new strategy, stay in the room for a few minutes and make gentle 'shh shh' sounds
- If your baby remains calm, leave the room. If unsettled, stay and provide reassurance until calm
- When you leave the room, remain somewhere close by in case more reassurance is needed
- If your baby starts making noises, wait before you intervene. Babbling, whinging, brief cries and movement are common when a baby is trying to settle
- If your baby's cries go up and down in volume, wait a short time to see if they will go to sleep
- If the noise continues to increase, return to your baby and offer comfort while your baby is still in the cot

If this is not working, use the techniques from 'Hands-on' or 'Settling in Arms'. Try again next sleep cycle as baby learns with consistent and predictable patterns.

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Parental Presence

Recommended for: 6 months and beyond

This strategy is useful if your baby becomes distressed when you leave the room. It may take from 1 – 4 weeks. During the day stay in the baby's room until they are asleep and during the night sleep in the baby's room.

- Have a quiet, calm room that is dimly lit
- Have a bed or mattress in the room for you to lie on
- Stay in view, remain calm, close your eyes and breathe slowly
- If your baby wakes, make a small noise or movement to let them know that you are still there without interacting directly
- If your baby is crying and needs reassurance, offer comfort such as 'shhh' sounds or gentle soft words such as 'time for sleep now'. Move on to other forms of comfort as needed
- Aim to have your baby stay in their cot. Once your baby is calm, lie down, close your eyes and breathe slowly
- If at any time you feel like you've had enough, or your baby continues to be distressed, stop and use a different strategy such as 'Hands-on' or 'Settling in Arms'
- Once your baby has had 3 consecutive nights of relatively uninterrupted sleep, begin to leave the room before your baby is asleep and move to your own room

Gradual Withdrawal

Recommended for: 12 months and beyond

The aim of Gradual Withdrawal is for your child to learn to fall asleep without your help. This is a good strategy when moving from a cot to a bed.

Gradual Withdrawal starts with you being close to your child while they fall asleep. Over the next few days or weeks, you slowly move further away until your child is confident to settle on their own.

- Put your child in bed and start by sitting beside or on the bed. Your child may like some physical contact initially, e.g. holding hands
- Reassure your child that if they stay in bed, you will remain until they have fallen asleep (e.g. end of bed, on a chair in the room)

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- Avoid discussions and responding to requests such as 'I want a drink' or 'another story'
- If your child continually gets out of bed, calmly take your child back to bed
- Over the following days or weeks, gradually increase the distance between you, until eventually you are outside the room
- Once outside the room, reassure your child that you are nearby. If your child leaves the bed, walk them back calmly saying "it's time for bed"

During the day, if your child does not actually go to sleep, don't be discouraged. Each attempt to settle in bed is a valuable learning experience.

Alternate Strategies to Calm your Baby Settling In a Pram

Sometimes using a pram to settle your baby can be a short-term option, such as when you are out.

It may also work at home when your baby won't settle in the cot. We recommend that this is only done during the day and have your baby facing you.

When out and about

- It is best not to cover the pram. However if there are bright lights or other distractions, try using a hood to allow for air flow and have baby facing you
- Regularly check that your baby is not getting too hot and is settled

When at home

- Use the pram as a last resort
- Movement may help calm your baby. Try walking the pram around the house (on one level) or take your baby for a walk outside in the pram

If you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed:

S-T-O-P: Stop what you are doing - Take a few breaths - Observe (what is happening? how am I feeling? what is best to do next?) - Proceed

Here are a few suggestions you can try:

- Place your baby gently in the cot and leave the room. Your baby is safe there while you calm yourself
- Take a few deep, slow breaths. Stretch or walk outside for a moment
- Phone your Child and Family Health Centre or a friend or relative for support
- Call the Karitane Careline on 1300 227 464

Need Help?

Don't hesitate to seek help from family, friends or the Karitane Careline
1300 CARING (1300 227 464)

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For Parenting information:

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