

Baby Behavior: Understanding Newborn Behaviors

Who: Prenatal women enrolled in WIC

Why: Pregnant mothers, especially first time mothers, may have little knowledge of normal infant behavior and unrealistic expectations about newborn sleep patterns and reasons for crying. Many believe their infants' crying and waking up is a sign of hunger. These beliefs lead to formula supplementation, early weaning, and early introduction of solid foods to get their infant to stop crying or sleep longer. Educating women prenatally about infant sleep patterns and reasons for crying, and providing them with tools to help them find solutions to common concerns will help moms have more realistic expectations of normal baby behavior.

Time: 25-30 minutes

Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Explain the differences between light and deep sleep
- Discuss why infants need to wake up often
- Identify at least one hunger cue
- List ways to calm a crying newborn

Lesson

Overview:

1. Introduction
2. Concept: Light Sleep and Deep Sleep
3. Concept: Waking Up
4. Concept: Hunger Cues
5. Concept: Calming a Crying Newborn
5. Closing

Materials: Flip chart or whiteboard and markers
Prenatal Class Clips: Understanding Your Newborn Baby's Behavior DVD
Handout: Getting to Know Your Baby
Incentive

Introduction

"Welcome to today's class about understanding your newborn's behaviors. My name is _____ and I will be leading class today. We will be talking about newborn behavior so you know what to expect after your baby is born. Knowing what to expect and understanding your baby better will help you feel less stressed and more confident in caring for your baby."

"Today we will:

- Talk about the difference between light and deep sleep
- Discuss why your newborn will need to wake up often
- Learn how to recognize hunger cues and
- Talk about ways to calm your crying baby."

If possible, write the class topics on a white board or flip chart

Class Introductions

- Allow several minutes for class introductions. If class is large, consider using Option 2.

Option 1: "Let's start class by finding out how many of you are new moms (and/or dads, grandparents) and how many of you are experienced moms (and/or dads, grandparents). Let's go around the room and have each of you introduce yourself and tell us if this is your first baby or if you have other children."

Option 2: "By a show of hands, how many of you are new moms (and/or dads, grandparents)? How many of you have other children?"

Concept: Light Sleep and Deep Sleep

"Let's talk about newborn babies and how they sleep. When you hear someone say, 'I slept like a baby last night!' What do you think they mean?"

- Allow time for participants to answer
- Possible answers*:
 - Sleep a lot
 - Sleep peacefully
 - Sleep soundly
 - Sleep deeply, not easily awakened
 - Sleep with no worries

*These answers show unrealistic expectations about how babies sleep.

"This saying 'I slept like a baby last night!' makes many people think that babies will sleep peacefully and soundly. Do babies sleep peacefully and soundly all the time? What do you think?"

- Pause and allow time for response

"Before we talk about what research has to say about how babies really sleep, take a minute to look at this handout."

- Distribute Baby Behavior handout
- Give participants a few moments to look through the handout
- Instruct participants to review the page titled "How Does Your Baby Sleep"

"Your baby needs to go through periods of both light and deep sleep. Both types of sleep are important for your baby's health and development. Who would like to read the descriptions of light sleep and deep sleep?"

- Pause and wait for volunteers
- If no one volunteers, the facilitator will read the descriptions

"Follow along as I read the descriptions of light and deep sleep."

- Read the 'Light Sleep' description
- Read the 'Deep sleep' description

"Let's watch a quick video to see the difference between these two types of sleep. First, we will watch two babies in light sleep."

- Play the “Light Sleep” video clip

“What did you see the babies doing during light sleep?”

- Allow time for participants to respond
- Affirm responses
- Provide answers that were not given. For example:
 - Baby moved a little every now and then
 - Eyes twitched or moved under eyelids – infant was dreaming
 - Face and body twitched
 - Smiled

“During light sleep, your baby is dreaming. Dreaming is important because during this time your baby’s brain is very active. Blood flow increases to the brain, supplying needed nutrients. This helps your baby grow and develop.”

“Now let’s talk about deep sleep. We’ll start by watching two babies in deep sleep.”

- Play “Deep Sleep” video clip

“What did you notice the babies doing during deep sleep?”

- Possible answers:
 - Babies did not move very much
 - Arms and legs were relaxed and floppy
 - Hard to wake
- Provide any answers not provided by participants

“During deep sleep, your baby’s brain and body are resting. Both types of sleep are important. Newborn babies fall asleep in light sleep. Some newborns will wake up easily if you lay them down while in light sleep. Wait for signs of deep sleep before laying your baby down.”

“What questions do you have about how infants sleep?”

FACTS ABOUT LIGHT AND DEEP SLEEP

- Sleep patterns:
 - ✓ Birth to 6 weeks
 - Newborns sleep about 14 to 16 hours in a 24-hour period but only sleep a few hours at a time. **This is normal.**
 - During the first 6 weeks, a newborn baby’s sleep is unpredictable. Newborns are still getting used to the new world around them and may mix-up days and nights.
 - ✓ 6 to 8 weeks
 - Baby may sleep more at night because they are awake more during the day.
 - Waking at night is still healthy and normal.
 - ✓ About 3 months
 - Longest stretch of sleep will be at night.
 - Baby may wake less often.
 - ✓ About 6 months
 - Baby is able to sleep up to 6 hours at one time.



Concept: Waking Up

"Many parents will say the hardest part about being a new parent is their newborn waking up at night. Waking up at night is safe, healthy, and normal. Let's talk about why waking up often is important for newborn babies."

"Take a minute to think about why a baby might wake up during the night."

"I need a volunteer to help me with this activity. All you have to do is draw a few different things for me."

- Pause and wait for volunteers
- If no one volunteers, the facilitator can be the artist
- Ask the volunteer to draw a newborn baby on the flipchart or whiteboard

"What are some reasons a baby might wake up in the middle of the night? Who wants to share the ideas they thought of?"

- As participants list reasons, the facilitator or volunteer will draw the reasons as part of the baby outline on the flip chart.
- **Possible answers:**
 - Baby is too hot or too cold.
"Babies wake up if they are too hot or too cold. If your baby is sweating, he or she may be dressed too warmly or covered with too many blankets."
 - Baby is sick.
"Babies sometimes wake up when they don't feel well. If you notice changes in your baby's sleep or behavior and are concerned, call your doctor."
 - Baby is hungry
"Remember, your baby's stomach is about the size of his fist - so as big as this belly ball/ping pong ball/walnut. Babies wake up often to eat because their stomachs can only hold a small amount each time they feed. It's normal for newborns to eat 10 - 12 times in 24 hours."
- Refer to FAQs for help responding to unexpected answers

"Now we know why it is important for young babies to wake up frequently though out the night. Waking up during the night is important to keep your baby healthy. Babies must wake up to be fed and when they need help to be safe and comfortable. Remember that waking up keeps your baby safe and is healthy and normal. Also remember that pediatricians recommend putting babies on their backs to sleep. As your baby gets older, he or she will sleep for longer periods of time and wake less often during the night."

"What question do you have about babies waking up during the night?"

TIPS FOR SLEEPY PARENTS

New parents can expect to get less sleep. For the first several months, parents will sleep in 2 – 3 hour stretches. These tips will not help a baby sleep through the night because waking up at night is important for newborns' health. However, these tips will help parents get a little more sleep.



1. Keep your baby close to you at night

Pediatricians recommend putting the crib or bassinet in the same room for the first few months. Parents won't have to go far when baby wakes up and needs something.

2. Try some "white noise"

Play soft music or turn on a quiet fan. Parents will still be able to hear their baby when he really needs them, but won't wake them every time he moves.

3. Keep lights low

Instruct parents to keep the lights low while feeding, burping or changing their baby's diaper during the night. This will help parents get back to sleep more quickly. Remind parents they do not want low lighting if they are doing something that requires their full attention - for example, giving their baby medicine.

4. Sleep when your baby sleeps

Parents might think it is impossible for them to sleep while their baby sleeps but even 90 minutes of sleep can help them feel more rested.

5. Ask for help

Taking care of an infant can be hard work. Encourage parents to ask family and friends for help at home.

Concept: Hunger Cues

"Another concern many new parents have is how to know when their newborns need to be fed. So let's talk about hunger cues. An important point to remember is that newborns need to be fed often. Please turn your attention to the 'Cues' page - the inside, middle page of your handout."

"When your newborn is hungry, he may:

- Keeps his hands near his mouth
- Bend his arms and legs
 - **It is important to emphasize is that the bending of arms and legs is towards the body, not away from the body.**
- Make sucking noises
- Pucker his lips
- Search for the nipple (root)

When your newborn is full, he may:

- Suck slower or stop sucking
- Relax his hands and arms
- Turn away from the nipple
- Push away
- Fall asleep"

"Babies usually give several cues at one time. Responding to hunger cues early can prevent your baby from becoming too upset and it is much easier to feed your baby when he is clam."

"Let's watch a video of a newborn baby crying because of he is hungry."

- Play "Hunger Cues" video clip

"What hunger cues did you see the baby giving during this video?"

- Affirm correct answers

"Great answers! Remember - watching for and responding to hunger cues early can prevent babies from getting too upset and some crying. Now let's watch another video. In this video, the baby is crying but is not hungry."

- Play "Crying Baby" video clip

"What did you see the baby doing in this video?"

"Great! You noticed the baby's movements were jerky and baby had tense muscles with stretched out arms and fingers. When your baby shows you these movements, your baby is not hungry but is telling you he needs something to be different."

- Remind participants the 'Cues' page gives them more information about understanding their baby's cues.

FACTS ABOUT CUES

I Want to Be Near You Cues

As newborns get older, it will be easier for parents to tell when their baby is ready to interact, learn or play. When babies are ready to engage, they might:

- ✓ Have a relaxed face and body
- ✓ Follow your voice and face
- ✓ Reach towards you
- ✓ Stare at your face
- ✓ Raise their heads

I Need Something to Be Different Cues

Learning is hard work for infants and they tire quickly from engaging and interacting. Infants will show signs that they need something to be different. When babies need something to be different, they might:

- ✓ Look away, turn away, or arch their backs
- ✓ Frown or have a glazed look in their eyes
- ✓ Stiffen their hands, arms, or legs
- ✓ Yawn or fall asleep



Concept: Calming a Crying Newborn

"Crying can be very stressful for parents. But, crying is normal and an important way for babies to communicate their needs. As your baby gets older, she will get better at communicating to you what she needs and she will cry less. So now, we will talk about ways to calm your crying baby."

"Please turn to the 'Why is Your Baby Crying' page in your handout. Your baby cries as a way to communicate to you that he or she needs your help. This page gives you steps for calming your crying baby."

- **Read Step 1:** "Step 1 is to try to figure out the reason for crying. What are some reasons a baby might cry?"

Answer: By crying, babies might be saying ...

- He needs something to be different
- He would like some quiet time
- He needs a diaper change
- He needs to be close to you
- He is too hot or too cold
- He needs to be burped
- He is sick
- He is hungry
- He is afraid
- He is tired

"Calming your baby may be as easy as changing her diaper or feeding her if she is giving you hunger cues. There will be times when you have checked everything and your baby still cries. When this happens, move to Steps 2 and 3. I need two volunteers to read Steps 2 and 3."

- Pause and allow time for participants to volunteer.
- If no one volunteers, facilitator read Steps 2 and 3.

"Step 2 is to hold your baby close to you and step 3 is to repeat the same action over and over. Let's watch a video clip that shows a mom trying to calm her crying baby."

- Play the "Overstimulated Baby" video clip

"Turn to your neighbor and talk about what you saw the mom in the video doing."

- Allow a few moments for participants to discuss

"Does anyone want to share what they discussed with their neighbor? Was she able to calm her baby?"

- Pause and wait for responses
- **Answer:** "No, she was not able to calm her baby because she was trying to do too much. Trying too many different things all at once can overwhelm your baby and make him more upset."

"Now let's watch a video that shows how babies are calmed by repeating the same action over and over."

- Play "Calming Your Baby" video clip

"What was different about how the babies in this video were calmed compared to the baby in the previous video we just watched."

- Pause and wait for responses

- **Answer:** "These babies were held close and calmed by repeating the same action over and over. Sometimes your baby will calm down right away and sometimes it may take longer."

"What other things can you do to calm a crying baby?"

- **Answer:** "You might try one of the following."
 - Speaking or singing softly
 - Gently rocking, swaying or bouncing your baby
 - Gently massaging her back, arms, and legs"

"Remember to be patient. Calming a baby takes time. Sticking with the same calming action for several minutes can be the secret to success. If your baby continues to cry or becomes more upset, after several minutes of the same action, try a different action discussed today."

"What questions do you have about calming your baby?"

TIPS FOR COPING WITH A CRYING BABY

It may take a while for a crying baby to calm down. This can be very frustrating and tiring for parents. Here are some tips to help parents cope with a crying baby.

- ✓ Parents can ask a friend or family member to give them a break by helping with their baby.
- ✓ Parents should consider laying their baby down in a safe place for few minutes and take a break if they start to feel angry or overwhelmed.
- ✓ Remind parents babies cry less and less as they get older.
- ✓ Parents should contact WIC or their doctor if they think their baby is crying too much.

Closing

"Having a baby is a very exciting time. Just remember the first six to eight weeks can be the hardest on parents. As you get know your baby, you will be able to recognize what he is trying to tell you and be able to respond to his needs. As your baby gets older things are going to get easier."

"Today we identified the differences between light and deep sleep. We discussed why infants need to wake up often and how to recognize hunger cues. Finally, we compared ways to calm a crying baby. We covered a lot of information! So please turn to your neighbor and share one thing you want to remember when your baby arrives."

- Pause and wait for a few moments

"Who would like to share?"

- Affirm responses and provide each parent who shares with a fun incentive

Thank participants for attending the Baby Behavior Understanding You Newborn's Behavior class.

Frequently Asked Questions for Prenatal Class

Participants often have questions that are not addressed in the class outline or *Getting to Know Your Baby* brochure. These “frequently asked questions” will help answer participant’s questions that may come up during class discussions.

1. What is the average length of time that babies sleep?

Newborns sleep about 14 to 16 hours in a 24 hour period, but not all at one time. At 2 to 4 weeks of age young babies are able to sleep 2 to 4 hours at one time. By 6 to 8 weeks babies sleep more during the night time as they are awake more during the day. By 3 months of age babies are able to sleep up to 4 hours at one time and by 6 months babies may be able to sleep up to 6 hours at one time.

2. When will babies sleep through the night?

Babies sleep for longer stretches and wake less often during the night. Every baby is different, but 6-month-olds are mature enough to sleep up to 6-hours at one time. A 6-8 hour stretch of sleep is considered “sleeping through the night.” Keep in mind that each participant may have a different definition of “night”. Remind participants that even if their baby sleeps through the night for a few days or weeks, changes in the baby’s routine, sickness, growth spurts, or other things may cause night waking to occur again for a short time.

3. How long does it take a baby to go into deep sleep?

Newborns fall asleep in light sleep. About 20-30 minutes later, they go into deep sleep. Every baby is different, so look for signs of deep sleep to be sure. As babies get older, they will go from light sleep to deep sleep more quickly. By 4 months of age, many babies fall asleep in deep sleep.

4. Do I have to lay my baby on his back to sleep?

Doctors recommend that babies be put on their backs to sleep to help prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Young infants who sleep on their stomachs are at an increased risk for SIDS.

5. Is it OK for my baby to sleep in my bed with me?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that babies sleep in the same room as their parent(s) but on a separate sleep surface.

6. What should I do when my baby wakes up in the middle of the night and won’t go back to sleep?

Acknowledge that this is difficult for parents but is normal baby behavior. During the first 6 weeks, a newborn’s sleep will be unpredictable, and he will not know the difference between day time and night time. Babies wake during the night because they need something. Find out what your baby needs (Is he hungry? Does he need a diaper change? Is he too hot or too cold? Is he uncomfortable?) and take care of his needs. Keeping the lights low while you care for your baby will help you both get back to sleep more quickly. After your baby’s needs are met, speak softly, rock him gently and encourage him to go back to sleep. Your baby will wake less as he gets older.

7. Why would you want to wake a sleeping baby?

A parent may need to wake a young baby who is not waking to feed often enough. Call your doctor if you are concerned that your baby is sleeping too much.

8. Is it bad to wake a baby who is in deep sleep?

It is not harmful to wake a baby who is in deep sleep. If you need to wake your baby use a variety of sounds and touches. Be patient, it may take several minutes to wake a baby that is in deep sleep.

9. When I lay my baby down and she wakes up right away, is it because she is used to being held all of the time?

Remember that newborn babies fall asleep in light sleep. Because of this, they may startle and wake up when laid down while still in light sleep. This is normal. Wait for signs of deep sleep before laying your baby down.

10. Is it good to let babies “cry it out” sometimes? Is it good for their lungs? Is it okay to let my baby cry herself to sleep? Am I spoiling my baby by picking her up when she cries?

You may have heard many things about letting babies cry. Babies cry to communicate that they need something. Responding to a baby's crying is simply taking care of her needs. Research shows that when parents respond to their babies' cries, babies develop confidence that their world is safe and secure. You can't spoil a baby by responding to her needs.

11. What do I do if I can't get my baby to stop crying?

Babies cry to tell parents that they need their help. Try to figure out why your baby is crying and respond to her needs. If your baby continues to cry after you have taken care of her needs, hold her close and repeat the same action over and over, such as gently rocking or swaying. Be patient; calming a crying baby takes time. If you start to feel angry or overwhelmed, lay your baby down in a safe place for a few minutes and take a break. If you think your baby is crying too much, contact your baby's doctor.

12. What is a comfortable room temperature for my baby?

If the room temperature is too hot or too cold for the parent, it may be too hot or too cold for the baby. If your baby is sweaty, he may be dressed too warmly or in too many blankets. Dress your baby in as many layers as you are wearing. Call your doctor if you have questions or concerns.

13. How do I know if my baby is sick?

Every baby is different and may show a wide variety of symptoms when sick. Common signs of illness include the following: fever (feel hot), skin color changes (very red cheeks, pale), increased crying, a change in sleep pattern, wheezing, problems breathing, blood in stools, diarrhea, vomiting, coughing, and/or a runny nose. There may be other symptoms. Call your baby's doctor if you think your baby may be sick or call 911 if you need help right away.

14. Is it good to swaddle your baby?

There may be certain circumstances when swaddling is appropriate for very young infants. Swaddling may help calm very young babies, but swaddling older babies is discouraged. Swaddling limits your baby's ability to move his body and gain strength and coordination. It also makes it hard for your baby to use his body to give you cues and limits your ability to read his cues.

15. Can I use a bouncy seat or swing to help calm my baby?

The best way to calm a crying baby is to hold your baby close to you and repeat the same words or actions over and over. Bouncy seats and swings also provide repetitive motions that can soothe babies. However, many seats and swings now come with sounds and music as well. Too many sounds can overwhelm your baby. It may be helpful to turn off the music and turn the swing to face the wall. Although this may seem boring to an adult, it is actually calming to a baby. Be careful not to overuse this equipment. In order to grow and develop, babies need time to move their bodies freely in a safe place.