



## **7 Tips For Managing Daycare Nap Schedules**

**by Nicole Johnson, President of The Baby Sleep Site®**

Daycare and childcare services are a necessity for many families - and with so many high-quality childcare providers available these days, parents have lots of great options from which to choose!

Unfortunately, making sure your child is getting adequate sleep at childcare can be difficult. Not to worry, though - below are 7 tips you can use to ensure your child get adequate sleep each day, and to make your daycare's schedule work for your little one.

### **1. Calculate how much wake time the daycare's nap schedule demands, and then compare that with how much you know your baby or toddler can tolerate.**

For instance, if the daycare schedule leaves 5 hours of wake-time between morning drop-off and the afternoon nap, but your baby can only manage 4 in the morning, then you'll need to accommodate for that by changing bedtime, or re-arranging other parts of your daytime schedule.

### **2. Try to prepare your baby for a new schedule early.**

If you know that daycare will soon change your baby or toddler's daytime nap schedule, try to get a head-start. Begin slowly moving towards the daycare schedule at home, by gradually shifting nap times until they match the daycare's. This can help to gradually acclimate your baby to what's coming, and might help ward-off over tiredness.



**3. If the daycare schedule calls for fewer naps than your baby or toddler is used to, OR if the afternoon wake-time is longer than what your little one is accustomed to, *shift bedtime earlier for awhile.***

An earlier bedtime will help compensate for the sleep your baby or toddler is losing at daycare. In general, though, remember that you don't want a bedtime that happens before 6 p.m.

**4. Make up for lost sleep on the weekends.**

If your at-home schedule is different than the new daycare schedule (and if your at home schedule allows for more sleep), then consider sticking to your home schedule on the weekends. This will help make up for lost sleep, in many cases. Of course, this may backfire; if your baby or toddler is sensitive to change, then switching back and forth may be more problematic than helpful. In that case, it's best to stick with the daycare schedule every day, but offer an earlier bedtime and then allow for a later wake-up time on the weekends, if possible.

**5. Shift your baby's morning wake-time and bedtime to match daycare's daily schedule.**

In the early stages of the transition, you may need to offer an early bedtime for a bit, while your baby adjusts. After that initial adjustment period, however, try changing your child's wake-time and bedtime so that they jive well with the new schedule. So, for instance, if your baby's naps at daycare happen at later times in the day than they do at home, try shifting wake-time and bedtime a bit later, too, so that the whole schedule shifts forward to accommodate the later naps. Or, if daycare has your baby on one nap, even though you know he still may need 2 naps, try offering an earlier bedtime and a later wake-time (if you can – not always easy when you need to be out the door early!). This will provide additional night sleep that may offset the lost nap sleep.



#### **6. For babies under 9 months, an early-evening catnap may be in order.**

If your baby is less than 9 months old, and is becoming overtired due to a new daycare schedule that requires too much wake-time or doesn't allow for enough nap time, it may be wise to offer a nap as soon as you're home in the evening. Note that we DON'T recommend this for babies over 9 months; it will only serve to create a too-late bedtime, in most cases! But for younger babies, an early-evening catnap can really help to keep sleep totals where they need to be. Note that if you do the early-evening catnap, you may need to offer a later bedtime.

#### **7. Use the car for catnaps, if necessary.**

If you have an early commute and have to wake your baby early in the a.m. to get to daycare on time, try using the drive to daycare as a chance to encourage a catnap. Same with the drive home – provided your drive isn't too late, you might try coaxing a catnap from your little one during the drive home. So many children sleep well in the car, so letting your little guy or little girl make up for lost sleep on the drive can work wonders. (Of course, be advised that if your evening commute home is on the later side, a catnap may backfire, as it may lead to a ridiculously late bedtime).

I truly hope these tips are helpful for you and for your family as you work to ensure your baby or toddler gets all the sleep that he or she needs! For additional sleep help, including hundreds of free blog articles and 5 free e-books, I encourage you to visit The Baby Sleep Site® at [www.babysleepsite.com](http://www.babysleepsite.com).



*Nicole Johnson is a married mother of two wonderful boys and owner of The Baby Sleep Site®. When her eldest son was born, he had a lot of sleep problems – he would wake every one or two hours, all night long! She got busy and thoroughly researched literature and scientific reports until she became an expert in sleep methods, scheduling routines, baby developmental needs, and more. She overcame her son's sleeping issues in a way that matched her own parenting style, and knew it was her mission to help other tired parents "find their child's sleep". If you have your own sleep issues, maybe she can help you, too.*

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