

Sleeping for Two

Tips for Better Sleep During Pregnancy and Postpartum

We recommend 7-9 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period, and we also understand that poor sleep is a common challenge during pregnancy and the postpartum period. Fortunately, there are strategies that may help you sleep better.

GENERAL SLEEP TIPS	
Only use the bed for sleeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The goal is for your mind and body to equate the bed with sleeping and not with anxiously waiting for sleep to come.• No TV, working, or reading in the bed – only sleeping (and sex)!• If you're awake in bed for longer than 20 minutes, get out of bed and do something relaxing in dim light. Get back in bed when you're sleepy.• Sleep should only happen in bed (not on the sofa).
Avoid media use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid using the computer, phone, television, or tablet in the hour before bed and in the middle of the night.• Anxiety and blue light both make it harder to fall asleep.• Silence the sound and vibration on your phone; ideally store it in another room when you sleep.
Make the room dark	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An eye mask (also called sleep masks) may be helpful.• If an eye mask isn't comfortable, use blackout curtains. You can even tape dark garbage bags or tinfoil on your windows. It might look funny, but it does the trick!• Place nightlights in the path to your bathroom so you don't need to turn on bright lights when walking to the bathroom in the middle of the night.
Make the room cool	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Warm temperatures can disrupt sleep.• If you have window shades or blinds, close them during the day to keep out the sun.• If possible, use fans and light bedding at night.
Make the room quiet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce disruptive noises by using earplugs or a white-noise or nature-noise machine or app.
Wind down	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare your mind and body for sleep an hour before bedtime.• For example, get in your pajamas and try a mindfulness practice.
TIPS FOR SLEEP DURING PREGNANCY	
Try to sleep on your side	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• After 28 weeks, your uterus is getting bigger and can compress the big blood vessels that feed your uterus and the baby. Although it can be difficult to control your sleep position during the night, try to sleep on either side, and not flat on your back if possible.
Keep snacks nearby	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To help with hunger or queasiness.
Manage pain and discomfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use supportive pillows or a body pillow to improve comfort and relieve pressure on aching muscles.• Yoga may help with pain and improve sleep.• Get regular exercise (but not right before bed).
Treat heartburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid foods that may contribute to heartburn (citrus fruits, spicy foods, caffeine).• Sleep slightly upright.
Reduce frequent trips to the bathroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drink plenty of water during the day, but try cutting back before bed.

TIPS FOR SLEEP DURING THE POSTPARTUM PERIOD

Practice safe sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants sleep in the same bedroom as their parents for at least the first 6 months of life. • Infants should sleep on a separate surface, such as a crib or a bassinet, and never on a couch, armchair, or soft surface. • Place baby on his or her back. • Avoid the use of soft bedding, including crib bumpers, blankets, pillows, and soft toys. The crib should be bare.
Enlist others to help with infant caregiving at night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with your partner or family how they can help with infant feedings, diaper changes, and soothing as much as possible. • Night doulas can be extremely helpful (especially 2-3 nights per week for the first 2 months), though pricy.
Make it easy to care for infant in the middle of the night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, have your infant sleep in a bassinet nearby. • Store infant caregiving supplies nearby. • Place nightlights or dimmable lights near infant care areas.
Feed with breastmilk, if possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents who feed their infant exclusively with breastmilk tend to sleep longer than those who supplement with formula.
Improve infant sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Sleep when the baby sleeps” makes the most sense in the first few months after your baby’s birth. • After that, you can find helpful suggestions for improving infant sleep in the following resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Sleeping Through the Night: How Infants, Toddlers, and Their Parents Can Get a Good Night’s Sleep</i>, by Jodi Mindell ○ <i>The No-Cry Sleep Solution: Gentle Ways to Help Your Baby Sleep Through the Night</i>, by Elizabeth Pantley ○ Babysleep.com ○ Takingcarababies.com

Talk to your provider if you are experiencing more severe sleep problems, such as:

- Insomnia symptoms including difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking much earlier than wanted
- Sleep apnea symptoms including snoring, breathing pauses, or gasping, and daytime sleepiness
- Unpleasant, restless feelings in legs that are worse at night and that can be relieved with movement

Please know that there are treatment options – including those that don’t involve medication.

Bay Area sleep clinics:

- UCSF Sleep Disorders Center, (415) 885-7886
- UCSF Neuro/Psych Sleep Clinic, (415) 353-2273 (Dr. Felder specializes in working with pregnant and postpartum women)
- The Stanford Center for Sleep Sciences and Medicine, (650) 723-6601
- Stanford Sleep Health and Insomnia Program, (650) 498-9111 option 2 (Dr. Manber specializes in working with pregnant and postpartum women)
- The Clinic, www.theclinicca.org

Other helpful resources:

- *Quiet Your Mind & Get to Sleep* by Colleen E. Carney and Rachel Manber
- *Say Good Night to Insomnia* by Gregg Jacobs and Herbert Benson

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