

# THE MILKY WAY SLEEP COMPANY



RESTFUL NIGHTS,  
HAPPY THRIVING DAYS

SLEEP REGRESSION GUIDE

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# Helping Families Sleep So They Can Thrive

A Comprehensive Guide to Sleep  
Regressions for Babies and Toddlers



## Welcome

**WELCOME TO YOUR JOURNEY TOWARDS BETTER SLEEP! THIS GUIDE IS DESIGNED TO SUPPORT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY IN NAVIGATING THE MULTIPLE SLEEP REGRESSIONS THAT HAPPEN TO OUR CHILDREN DURING THEIR FIRST TWO YEARS OF LIFE.**

I understand that sleep is crucial to overall well-being.

Your little one has been on a pretty consistent schedule, making you feel somewhat human again; suddenly, it's back to where you started with multiple wakings at night, short naps, taking forever to fall asleep, being grumpy and clingy, and getting you sleep deprived and mentally exhausted again.

You are tired and frustrated, and this brings out sides of you that you don't like. To make matters worse, you can see that your little one is just as exhausted and frustrated as you. The whole situation feels unfair and feels like it will be your new normal for the rest of your life. Drumroll... It will not! Things will get better.

Welcome to the very common and normal world of sleep regressions. They happen to all children and can vary in how severe they are. But guess what? They are actually great news, as they mean that your child is **PROGRESSING!**

*The Sleep  
Progressions*

I want us to start by changing our vocabulary and calling them sleep progressions!

They are indeed a sign that your child is going through significant changes developmentally, both physically and mentally. The things you will see them do during and after the progression will blow your mind.

They are phases of the first 2 years of life during which the child develops new skills, hits major milestones and often accompanies all this with growth spurts. All those put together tend to disturb sleep, but knowing the signs, you can be prepared to best love and support your child amidst their progressions. I am here to help you better understand them, explain why they happen, how they affect your baby's sleep patterns, and what you can do to survive a sleep progression as it's happening. Let's take a closer look at each of the sleep progression intervals.

# 4 months sleep regression

## What to expect:

This one tends to be the hardest because it is the first, and even though it is expected, it is a challenge. Night sleep is often more erratic, with more waking. Naps tend to be very short and usually cause much frustration to parents who are used to having babies sleeping anywhere, anytime, and through anything. There is lots of fussiness and crying as soon as parents are out of sight.

## Why:

During this progression, we see babies becoming more aware of their surroundings, starting to understand object permanence and its opposite (i.e., you leaving the room), starting to roll, and holding their heads longer during tummy time.

## What to do:

This is the best time to introduce (if not already done) an excellent sleep environment with a dark room, a sound machine to block out other sounds, and the elimination of the swing or other sleep props. Create a bedtime routine to continue working towards habits and predictability. That routine can extend to starting a daytime routine with feeds and naps and following the eat-play-sleep pattern. Finally, remember to be patient and consistent.

# 6 and 9 months sleep progression

## What to expect:

These two are not happening simultaneously but are often caused by the same changes.

We will see some early morning waking (before 6 a.m.), frequent night waking, and short naps.

## Why:

This progression is caused by more movement: rolling both ways, sitting unassisted, starting solids, and teething! By 9 months, we see even more milestones around crawling and pulling to standing. You may catch them waking up at night standing in their crib.

Remember, by 6 months or sooner (when they can sit), you should lower the mattress to the lowest position in the crib.

## What to do:

Continue to be consistent and to promote healthy sleep habits.

Maintain the bedtime routine, and do not add new habits that could become a sleep prop or that you do not want to see sticking around going forward.

Spend quality time with them and give them extra attention.

Please allow them to practice all those new skills.

If napping is still a struggle after 6 weeks, it may be a sign to reduce the number of naps from 3 to 2 a day.

# 12 months sleep regression

## What to expect:

We often see babies becoming clingy, cranky and prone to crying frequently, not just at bed or nap time.

You may see more middle-of-the-night waking, early mornings, and shorter naps. It is more often than not a sleep progression, but sometimes, a nap may need to be dropped, going from 2 to 1 nap a day around the same age. But don't rush the transition to one nap. Most children are not ready to switch to one nap until they are 15 to 18 months old.

## Why:

Many babies learn to walk, say a few words or signs, and play with more fine motor skills around one year. They also begin understanding simple commands. They may also be cutting their first molars. If you suspect that teething impacts your child's sleep, refer your doctor or pediatrician for pain relief options.

## What to do:

Practicing all those skills during wake windows and spending quality, undivided attention with them is also essential.

Ten minutes of genuine play time can make a real difference. They also understand you way more than you may think, so give them a chance to make choices and ask them to help with simple tasks like putting a toy away, giving you something, etc.

Again, stay patient, stay consistent and be reassuring.

# 18 months sleep regression

## What to expect:

During this regression, you will see some night waking, some nap resistance and/or more abrupt wakings from naps.

## Why:

Your baby is not a baby anymore and will have more opinions on sleep matters, making it more challenging as they crave independence and attention. Their ability to walk, talk, and express their likes and dislikes stimulates them.

## What to do:

The best you can do is offer them choices during the day to satisfy their attention-seeking and independence-craving. This allows them to feel in control. It can be as simple as letting them choose their clothes or the red or green plate. You could even make them choose your plate for that extra sense of control.

You may also have to adjust naps and bedtimes. Too little day sleep may cause an overtired child to be more prone to waking in the middle of the night.

# 2 year sleep regression

## What to expect:

At 2 years old, your toddler may suddenly wake up at night, resist naps, or skip them. They may also be showing signs of separation anxiety around bedtime.

## Why:

Often, it is caused by significant changes like potty training, a big kid bed, a new sibling, starting preschool, etc. They can also be cutting their second set of molars. Nightmares, night terrors, and fear of the dark also start around that age.

## What to do:

Give your child plenty of attention during the day, acknowledge their fears and maybe even set a night light in their room. If they do not mention any concern about the dark, leave it be and do not change a thing.

It may also be a great time to introduce an "ok to wake" clock to foster that need for independence and reinforce the concept of schedules, wake time, bedtime, etc.

For separation anxiety, you can offer your child to put a heart on their doors while they sleep so they can see in the morning that you came and checked on them.

I'd like you to keep the nap. They may be fighting it, but it is still too early to drop it. When transitioning to a big kid bed, I suggest delaying that change. If your child is climbing out of the crib and putting themselves in danger by having complete freedom in their room or the house, keep them in the crib for as long as possible.

# What now?

During the first year of life, you will see some fantastic changes right before your eyes. First, they grow at an impressive rate that humans never achieve again. The same applies to the number of things they learn in the first year, such as motor skills ( they learn to walk) and cognitive skills ( they understand you and start talking).

You'll go from witnessing night and day confusion to establishing naptimes to that first night in their room and bed. You will see them experience their first solid foods, their first word, that favourite toy they can't live without, and more facial expressions, noises and personalities than you can imagine. The first year is full of change, so be easy on yourself, be patient with your baby, and enjoy those fleeting times.

But please, don't ever feel like being tired, overwhelmed, or sometimes fed up means you are inadequate or not good enough. Parenting is the most challenging job, and nobody can prepare you for it, even with the best advice. Try to surround yourself with people who will tell you that it's okay, that you are not alone, that they will offer help and mental support, and that they will remind you that this, too, shall pass.



# What now?

When you have a baby dealing with a developmental leap (aka a sleep progression), you are usually in what I like to call "survival mode."

Survival mode is when you are willing to do everything and anything to help them sleep a little bit longer and, in parallel, to give yourself even an extra hour of sleep.

I know the feeling. My secondborn hit all of his progression very harshly. They all lasted between 4 to 6 weeks, and by 9 months, I was ready to call for help, and I did and hired a sleep consultant.

One of the sleep crutches I put in place without really noticing was that I would nurse him before bed and naps. Even though I made sure we were not asleep before putting him down, he was drowsy enough that he would not know how to put himself back to sleep.

The way our children fall asleep is the way they believe they need to fall asleep. Being nursed to a state of drowsiness to wake up alone in his crib suddenly was what was creating all the tears and multiple wakings for my son. It just made sense when the consultant explained it to me. We switched to nursing when he woke from his naps, following an EAT—PLAY—SLEEP schedule, and things changed completely.

My personal experience and story can help and show you that little details matter. We want to put our children to sleep so they will be okay going back to sleep when they wake after their next sleep cycle. So if you are rocking, replacing a soother, or nursing to sleep, chances are your child will ask for the same thing at the next sleep cycle, which could very well be every 45 minutes.

The good news is that you can break some of these hard habits. Most habits occur around the 3-4 month mark - the first significant sleep regression.

# What now?

For all and any sleep prop, my main recommendation is as follows:

Rocking, swinging, or nursing before bed is not a bad thing. It is a great way to bond before bed and have that special moment with your child. The one thing you want to look for is not to get to the point where they are so drowsy that when you place them down in their bed, they won't learn to fall asleep on their own.

I always recommend that my client nurse, rock, or swing the child first, read a story, and then wake the child to bed.

Making sure they are drowsy but awake is key to fixing this issue.

All those sleep regressions are very challenging periods. It is often very easy to instill bad sleep habits as we are tired and are tempted to give in. Hold tight! You will thank yourself later. It will pass, but you need to stick to those good habits and avoid any habits that you do not want to see stick around, like bringing them in your bed, rocking to sleep, feeding to sleep, pacifier replacement, and swinging to sleep. Often, a regression lasts about 2 weeks, but it can be as long as 6.

If you have not been sleep-trained before, now might be a good time to introduce it to deal with the regression faster and ensure the whole family reacts the same way when helping the child fall asleep, go back to sleep, or take naps.

Remember, sleep training does not mean Crying It out! Quite the contrary. Sleep training teaches our children to fall asleep as independently as possible. When sleep training with me, we will look at your child's personality, parenting philosophy, goals, and comfort level before choosing between over six different methods that can always be modified to suit your needs.

But most of all, when working with me, you will get the support that all parents deserve. I will be here to coach you the entire way and be your sounding board—no more guessing games or wondering what to do next. I will be your guide and advisor and provide you with all the tools you need to make decisions in the future when I am not by your side anymore.

# Thank You



Thank you for choosing my sleep guide as a resource on your journey to better rest. I hope the information and tools provided have been helpful and empowering for you and your family. Your trust and commitment to creating healthier sleep habits are genuinely appreciated.

As you continue implementing these strategies, remember that each small step brings you closer to your goals. I am grateful to be part of your journey and am here to support you every step of the way.

Wishing you peaceful nights and joyful days,

**Gala Doka**  
**The Milky Way Sleep Company**

# Do you need more?

Maybe you had a great sleeper, and things have just started to slide since the last sleep regression? Maybe you are looking at weaning the night feed? Or maybe you are just looking at a coaching call? Have a look at my services and if you can't find anything that suits you, don't hesitate to contact me or to book a free consultation call.



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# Contact



I would love to hear from you and answer any questions you may have about my services. The best way to contact me is through my website contact form or via email. I typically respond within 24 hours, but please allow up to 72 hours during weekends and holidays.

(001) 250 430 1247

themilkywaysleepco@gmail.com

www.themilkywaysleepco.com



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