



BABIES' REST TIME

What is babies' rest time?

A quiet period to encourage undisturbed sleep for normal growth and development.

What happens at rest time?

Between **1.00pm and 3.00pm**, the lights are dimmed, curtains drawn and procedures are minimised. We all work together to try to reduce noise and minimise the babies disturbance unless medically required. A two hour protected rest time during the day gives babies some settling time, then **time for a full uninterrupted sleep cycle**.

Parents may choose to stay at their baby's bedside or take a break at this time. **Mothers need rest and good nutrition** to recover. Mothers can always put their feet up in the comfy chairs bedside the bed and **have a nap** as well. Some parents enjoy having time with their baby protected from interruption from other visitors. Some mothers enjoy the uninterrupted time to express milk at the baby's bedside. Some babies may be more settled having a kangaroo cuddle throughout this time.

What about visitors?

During this time, visits from people not essential for babies' welfare are restricted. We ask that you inform your visitors to come outside of these hours. All people, whether parents or staff, are asked to modify their behaviour –speaking softly, avoiding noisy activity. It is encouraged that only 2 people (both parents or a parent and 1 support person) are at the bed side during rest time.

Why do we have babies' rest time?

The final months of pregnancy are a time of brain growth. At 28 weeks gestation, the head circumference is about the size of a small lemon; by the time a baby is considered due to be born at 40 weeks, the head circumference is that of a large grapefruit or small rockmelon. At 35 weeks, the brain weighs only two thirds of what it should weigh at 40 weeks.

We know that undisturbed sleep is essential for **normal brain growth and development**. A term (born after 40 weeks gestation) baby sleeps for an average of 16 hours per day. Preterm babies require longer.

Neonatal units can be busy, noisy with bright light levels. By ensuring we modify the babies' bedrooms to be more restful, we hope to encourage undisturbed sleep.

Sleep is not only good for brain growth and development; it is good for **weight gain**. While a certain amount of movement helps to strengthen and develop the musculo-skeletal system, lots of extra movement wastes calories that could be used for growth.

If you have any further questions please ask the medical and nursing staff.

Prepared by the NICU/SCN Family Centred Care Advisory Group, which supports families and consists of parents, nursing, medical and allied health staff.

Approved by Canberra Hospital Dept of Neonatology, 2013

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