

sojourn  
HOME

## Parenting: Expectants and Newborns

John & Sandie Dostal

### **Week 4 – The Daily Life of a Newborn**

## Daily Life

With a newborn in the Dostal Home

**6:30 am feeding** While feeding your baby, redeem this precious time by reading God's word, praying, worshipping and reading other good books.

**diaper change** I usually wait to change their diaper until after feeding because then they have usually soiled their diaper and it wakes them up!

**awake time** Watch mobile (take a shower for the day), then tummy-time surrounded by toys and books to look at (read them some children's Bible stories), bouncy seat (while you eat breakfast etc.),

**nap time** see box on next page

**9:30 am feeding, diaper change,**

**awake time** Pack-n-play time with hanging toys (clean part of house), tummy time like before, bouncy seat (set them up to watch me finish cleaning),

**nap time** This is when I usually head out to run errands, leaving them in the infant car seat while I shop etc. As they get older and are awake longer, I put them in a carrier or backpack so that they fall asleep when they are tired. In general I have tried to get our kids used to sleeping in other locations than their own beds.

**12:30 pm feeding, diaper change,**

**awake time** Sit in high chair with toys on tray (while I do the dishes and get things ready for dinner), tummy time, Pack-n-play time laying in Boppy gym, **nap time**

**3:30 pm feeding, diaper change,**

**awake time** sit in bouncy seat outside (if the weather permits), tummy time, roll to back on blanket and read books together, take a bath (great way to wake them up/extend awake time), **nap time**

**6:30 pm feeding, diaper change,**

**awake time** swing (save the most effective calmer for the hardest part of the day), take a walk outside when home for the evening, tummy time, sit in car seat propped up, lay on tummy across my lap, lay on back on my legs (this is usually family time, time hanging out with others, CG, meetings etc., so do whatever works well since this is usually more the fussy time and you will often be with other people), **nap time** Our ultimate goal for bedtime is in bed by 8:00 pm, so that is what we shoot for from the beginning if possible (especially with other kids around, it is nice to have everyone going to bed at about the same time, though that can be hard with an infant).

**9:30 –10:30pm feeding** I like to back this

feeding up if possible to sometime closer to 10:00 or 10:30 pm, so as to get them extra hungry and feed really well. Then I put them straight down after burping and changing their diaper. During the night, I let them wake me up, which is usually somewhere between 2 ½ and 4 hours. I think the important thing is to help them figure out their nights and days. That is why I wake them up every 3 hours or so during the day if they haven't already awaken hungry, but let them sleep as long as they will during the night. Milk production has not been a concern for me since my normal day-time routine already consists of 6 regular feedings, sufficient breast stimulation, though there are obvious cases in which you may need to stick to a strict night time routine (jaundice, milk production extremely low or late in coming in, severely underweight or weak/sick baby to name a few), **diaper change, back to bed.**

## Feeding Tips

- If breastfeeding, nurse on both sides 20-30 min for first few days/weeks at the beginning, alternating which side you start with (as your baby gets older, they will get more efficient and nurse faster, 5-15 min per side). To calculate your feeding, count your time starting with the beginning of one feeding and ending at the beginning of the next. Newborn babies usually eat 8-10 times a day, roughly every three hours.
- Strive to start each day at about the same time and wake them roughly every three hours during the day to eat, unless baby wakes up earlier. This helps to establish days and nights, enables you to plan your day better, gives you comfort in knowing a general idea of what is next, and begins your role of training your child by helping them to realize they are not the center.
- Work to get a good latch in those first few days. Slip index finger in their mouth to break suck and try again. Make sure their mouth is open and tongue is down before pulling to breast; can use your nipple (even squeeze some milk out) to stimulate their lower lip to get them to open their mouth for a good latch. For a good latch, their lips should look as if they are sucking on a popsicle, taking in most/all of your areola. Also make sure their whole body is facing you, not just their head. Try different nursing positions to see which works best for latching on (cradle, football-hold, side-lying); you will probably need to hold your breast up with one hand and hold the baby's head with the other. If bottle feeding, this is still important, they should be taking in basically all of the nipple up to the plastic ring in which the nipple is fitted into.
- After your baby has been sucking for a short time (30 sec-2 min), your milk will let down and you should be able to see/hear your baby swallowing. This is called the let-down reflex. Both breasts will let down even though your baby is sucking on only one, so you may experience leaking (this can be a great way to build up your frozen milk supply by taking advantage of what would just be leaked and pumping; or apply pressure to nipple to cut off milk and lessen leaking). Also, once you have established a routine (or are engorged), your breasts may let you know it is time to nurse by letting down on their own (or if baby cries). Hot showers and sexual stimulate can also create a let-down. As time goes on and your baby gets older, you may see that it takes longer for your milk to let down. Eating well (even more calories than when pregnant), getting plenty of rest and drinking tons of water will help establish and maintain a good milk supply.
- Work to get a full feeding (active sucking for time on breast), so keep them awake! To keep them awake try: taking their clothes off, changing (or psuedo-changing) their diaper, wipe them with wet/cold washcloth (ice chips in the H work great), gently move them or walk around with them, burp them, whatever works! However much your baby feeds at this feeding today, will be what your breasts produce for the same feeding tomorrow.
- Burp them between sides and after done (try different positions: over the shoulder, sitting with hand under chin, lying tummy down on your lap or arm). Don't worry if they seem to spit up their whole meal, they have probably still gotten plenty (though there have been rare times when I nursed them a bit more)! Spitting up is more just coming out/dripping out of their mouth; vomiting is more projectile (read your medical book about vomiting as this can be dangerous when they are young if it is colored). In general I never watched what I ate because I wanted our children to be able to eat those types of foods. I couldn't ever seem to link things to food really confidently, but I have known others who would swear by them eating certain foods. Dairy is the only real concern (the others may be a nuisance if your child seems to spit up more, gasey, fussy), which produces bloody stools. Remember that some babies just tend to spit up more than others (Bring extra outfits, bibs and burp clothes regardless as there will be plenty of moments you will need them for spitting up, pooping or something else!).
- Your baby's first stool will be meconium (greenish-black, sticky stuff). As your milk comes in, it will transition in color to brownie-batter stools to yellow stools (My milk always comes in fast, within 2-4 days, but it could be up to a week.). Within the first 2-4 days your baby will have wet diapers. You will probably want to write a log of your feedings (when, how long) and diapers (# stools and color, # wet) for the first two weeks or until you and your doctor are comfortable with how things are going.
- Overall, this whole process of conceiving, birthing and caring for your baby is God's design, and it is good! Though God's blueprint is for a woman's body to produce milk for her baby to eat, we live in a sin-cursed world! Breastfeeding is hard, so give it a good try, but don't feel like a failure if you and your husband feel it is wiser to stop. Ultimately remember the picture in 1 Peter 2:2-3, that just as your baby craves milk, in the same way you should be desiring to grow up in Christ!

## Awake Time

- For the first few days, they may only be awake for a few minutes, but after even just 2 weeks they will be much more awake. You will learn their more awake times of the day and have to discern how much sleep they really need before the next feeding. They should be sleeping the last 1-2 hours before waking and feeding again (during the day).
- Babies are usually happiest right after being fed, so I try not to hold or play with them then, but encourage them to play on their own. I find there to be plenty of holding and cuddling while nursing & burping, fussy or sleepy before nap-time.
- Each of the ideas suggested in the daily schedule may last only 3-5 minutes at the beginning before baby falls asleep. If baby seems tired, you can try rotating to another activity to extend the awake time before laying them down. Gradually, each of those activities can be extended to 30 minutes or more.
- Remember these are some of your first opportunities to teach your child about God. Talk about God, read His Word, pray aloud, sing praises to God, cultivate Deuteronomy 6:5-9 & 20-25 as you live a God-centered life together!

### Middle of the Night Feeding #1

(between 12:30 am and 2:00 am, depending on start time of previous feeding and how long they slept), diaper change, back to bed

### Middle of the Night Feeding #2

(between 3:00 am and 4:30 am, depending on start time of previous feeding and how long they slept), diaper change, back to bed

### 6:30 am start over again!

Remember that God's compassion (mercies) are new every morning. He will not abandon you but instead show His faithfulness to you if you seek Him. Don't forget that your greatest need has been met in salvation through Christ (Lamentations 3:22-26)!

## Napping/Sleeping

- If possible, you want baby to learn how to fall asleep on their own and in their crib, so put them down while they are drowsy, but still awake. Of course, they may cry. Pacifiers can help, but determine what kinds of patterns you want to set (When will I use the pacifier? How many times will I come in and put the pacifier back in their mouth? Do I want the possibility of a long-term thumb-sucker?). Swaddling is also a great help as it simulates the warm-cozy womb, and decreases the chance of them waking themselves up. Your baby may eventually need to learn to cry it out. Set kitchen timer for 5-10 min or so, then go back in (pick-up and calm down or just pat on back) and check on them. Put them down, set the timer again and vacuum, or get involved in some other project that will distract you until checking again.
- In general, your baby should sleep 1 to 2 hours between each feeding during the day, and go straight back to sleep after the middle of the night feedings.
- It is common as your baby gets older for them to awake up during the middle of a nap, cry for a bit (10 seconds- 5 minutes) and fall back to sleep. Guard yourself from going in there and fully waking up the baby (cries are often their transition to a deeper sleep).
- God created our bodies to need sleep, though He is self-sufficient and doesn't need it! Both baby and you will handle life much better with good rest. Don't hesitate to take advantage of your baby's naptime by catching up on a few Zs yourself (Psalm 127)!
- Take care also to love your spouse by guarding your bed (not having baby... child sleep in it) and working hard to establish good sleep habits (to encourage time for just the two of you). Your baby is a byproduct of your relationship with your spouse for you two are one flesh, not you and your child (Matthew 19:4-6).

## Crying

- Most babies have a fussier time of the day (often times late afternoon, evening, or earlier half of the night; sometime between 4pm-midnight).
- Things to try: move them to a new activity, hold them in a different position, sing to them/play music, go outside or for a walk, move by swinging/dancing them around, pacifier (hold it in mouth or gently wiggle it in their mouth until they take it), burp them again (if soon after feeding), help them release gas (place their back against your tummy, bend and pull their legs in towards their chest), maybe nap-time?
- You'll learn when/what they typically cry for, which helps, but don't feel like you need to respond immediately. Remember that God calls us to act (ie: choose contentment, not respond in anger; choose trust, not give way to fear etc.), not react to the situations He has sovereignly placed in front of us. Start establishing God-oriented patterns at the beginning (see Ephesians 5:22-6:2 for the put-off, put-on principle).
- Think of it this way, your baby has no other way to communicate, nor other means of exercising their muscles, so if their belly hurts, they are hot, bored, hungry, want mommy etc. etc., they will cry. Remember too that we are all sinners from birth. If you are determining that your baby may be crying in a sinful way, it is your job to lovingly cross them (remember King David who never crossed his son, Adonijah) by saying something like, "I know you may not like to have your diaper changed (while you gently, yet firmly hold them in place), but we are still called to choose contentment and joy. God's word says that we are to 'Be joyful always... giving thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.' 1 Thessalonians 5:16,18. We definitely don't always do this, and that is why Christ came." Redeem these moments from the beginning by sharing the gospel with them constantly!

## Dropping Feedings and Introducing Food

- The first feeding they will drop is one of the middle of the night feedings. When this happens (sometime between birth and 8 weeks), your daytime routine will stay the same. At this time, you are down to 7 feedings in a 24 hour time period. Though it may not always be consistent, getting up just once in the night to feed is a welcomed step to continuous sleep for all of you!
- The second feeding to drop is the middle of the night feeding, the beginning to your whole family sleeping through the night. This usually occurs between 7 and 12 weeks, but again may be inconsistent. If having trouble getting this to happen, try nursing just one side (pump the other) during the night, eventually weaning them fully (you can also try offering warm water in a bottle instead of milk). Make sure to keep your daytime routine the same, at 6 feedings a day, and enjoy your full night's rest!
- Once you are well established (1 or 2 weeks of sleeping through the night), you can begin backing up the before-bed feeding 10-15 minutes each night, or every couple of nights (regular feeding time 10:30 pm, then 10:15 pm, then 10:00 pm, then 9:45 pm etc.). Continue this process until you are within 30 or 45 minutes of your intended permanent bedtime (our goal is to have all the kids in bed by 8:00 pm). At that time you need to judge whether your baby is ready to go to more of a 3 1/2 or 4 hour routine during the day and drop one feeding so you are at 5 feedings daily (Your schedule would look something like this, give or take 30 minutes: 6:30 am, 10:00 am, 1:30 pm, 5:00 pm, 8:00 pm.), or whether you should stick to the regular 3 hour routine for a week or so before dropping the 6<sup>th</sup> feeding (I would encourage you to keep the same daily schedule, but make your last feeding at 8:00 pm).
- Once you are at 5 daily feedings, establish your routine 1 or 2 weeks, then try encouraging them to sleep a little later in the morning by not waking them up at 6:30 am, and seeing how long they sleep (pacifier, let cry... little more or same amount of time each day). I would encourage you to try and keep to the 5 feedings a day until they are sleeping until 7:30 or 8 am. Some babies require more sleep than others and at some time you might be cutting out the evening nap (the one between 5 pm and 8 pm) in an effort also to encourage a little longer sleep in the morning. After they are established sleeping 11-12 hours for a week or 2, then you can try dropping another feeding so you are at your final goal of 4 feedings (8 am, 12 pm, 4 pm [I try to back up to 5 pm so it is more like dinner time and we are all more on the same schedule], 8 pm [I feed the baby during family worship around 7:45 pm so that they are all going to be at the same time]).
- You should be arriving at 4 feedings sometime around 4 or 5 months. Then I wait as long as possible to start rice cereal just because it is a lot of work/time (when they start waking up early or in night, it is time to start). Start with one meal (the one you have the most time with), adding the others as you see fit (after 1 -2 weeks). I usually start on food (I make my own food) after a few weeks of rice, oatmeal and other cereal and they have a handle on how to eat off a spoon. Introduce orange/yellow vegetables first, serving all 3 meals for 2-3 days, then the next and so on. Introduce fruits after established with vegetables, and always after or mixed with the vegetables (who doesn't like bananas over peas?). You will need to decide how you are going to handle it when your baby doesn't like food (preference or ungrateful, discontent).
- Remember that of all the things that will appeal to your baby, it should be God and His word (Psalm 34:8; 119:103-104)!