

Sleep disruption for breastfed babies is temporary

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While breastfed babies initially awaken more during the night for feedings, their sleep patterns -- falling asleep, staying asleep and total sleep time -- stabilize in later infancy and become comparable to non-breastfed babies, according to an abstract presented Monday, Oct. 17, at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) National Conference and Exhibition in Boston.

In the study, "Long-Term Relationship Between Breastfeeding and Sleep," 89 mothers of exclusively breastfed infants and 54 mothers of formula-fed infants (ages 3 to 12 months) completed the Brief Infant Sleep Questionnaire, and at four follow-up visits (at 3, 6, 9 and 12-to-18 months later).

In the initial survey, parents of exclusively breastfed infants reported more night waking, fewer naps, and more instances where their infant did not sleep in their own bed. Night waking and the infants not sleeping in their own beds were habits that persisted three months later for the breastfed infant group. However, six months later, the only difference between the groups was that the [breastfed infants](#) were less likely to wake up in their own bed. By 9 months later, all differences in sleep had disappeared.

"Families are often concerned that their baby will not sleep as well due to breastfeeding," said Jodi Mindell, PhD, the lead author of the study. "Our study found that although it is true that bottle-fed babies wake less often at night and sleep for longer stretches than babies who are nursing,

there are no differences in total amount of sleep. And more importantly, six months later there are no differences in sleep skills.

"Thus, families should not be concerned about establishing any long-term sleep issues when [breastfeeding](#)," said Dr. Mindell.

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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