

Babies who can resettle are more likely to 'sleep through the night'

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Young infants who can "resettle" themselves after waking up are more likely to sleep for prolonged periods at night, according to a video study in the June *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, the official journal of the Society for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics.

"Infants are capable of resettling themselves back to [sleep](#) by three months of age," according to the study by Ian St James-Roberts and colleagues of the University of London. They add, "Both autonomous resettling and prolonged sleeping are involved in 'sleeping through the [night](#)' at an early age."

Videos Show What Goes on When Babies 'Sleep Through the Night'

Dr. St James-Roberts and colleagues used infrared video cameras to make overnight recordings of 101 London [infants](#). Videos made at five weeks and three months of age were analyzed to determine changes in sleep and waking during this age span—a time when parents hope their baby will start sleeping more at night, while crying less.

The researchers also looked for times when the infants woke up but were able to "resettle autonomously"—to go back to sleep without parental involvement. The video evidence was compared with parental questionnaires on their infants' sleep behaviors.

The "clearest developmental progression" between video recordings was an increase in length of sleeps: from a little over 2 hours at five weeks to 3.5 hours at three months. Only about ten percent of infants slept continuously for 5 hours or more at five weeks, compared to 45 percent at three months.

At both ages, about one-fourth of infants awoke and resettled themselves—without parental contact—at least once during the night. These infants were able to go back to sleep with little or no crying/fussing. ([An online video](#) shows a three-month-old baby waking and resettling.)

"Self-resettling at five weeks predicted prolonged sleeping at three months," the researchers write. Sixty-seven percent of infants who resettled in the first recording slept continuously for at least 5 hours in the second recording, compared to 38 percent who didn't resettle.

Infants were more likely to suck their fingers or hands at three months compared to five weeks. Infants who slept through the night at three months spent more time sucking their fingers or hands—a "self-regulatory" strategy that may help them initiate or maintain sleep.

Previous studies have suggested that breast-fed infants wake up at night because they need to feed frequently. However, the new results showed no difference in resettling or sleep times for infants fed breast milk versus formula.

Waking up and crying at night is the most common type of infant sleep problem, and one that causes exhaustion and strain for parents. Previous video studies have shown that what parents call 'sleeping through the night' is a misnomer—older babies who 'sleep through the night' not only sleep for longer periods, but also have the ability to resettle themselves after waking.

The new study confirms that some infants develop this resettling ability in the first three [months](#) of age. "Findings indicate the need for studies of how arousal, waking and resettling develop into sustained sleeping, and of how environmental factors support these endogenous and behavioral processes," Dr. St James-Roberts comments. "If they fulfill their promise, the findings may eventually help to resolve the puzzle of why so many healthy infants should be diagnosed with sleep problems, as well as helping the families involved."

More information: "Video Evidence That London Infants Can Resettle Themselves Back to Sleep After Waking in the Night, as well as Sleep for Long Periods, by 3 Months of Age" [DOI: 10.1097/DBP.0000000000000166](#)

Provided by Wolters Kluwer Health

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