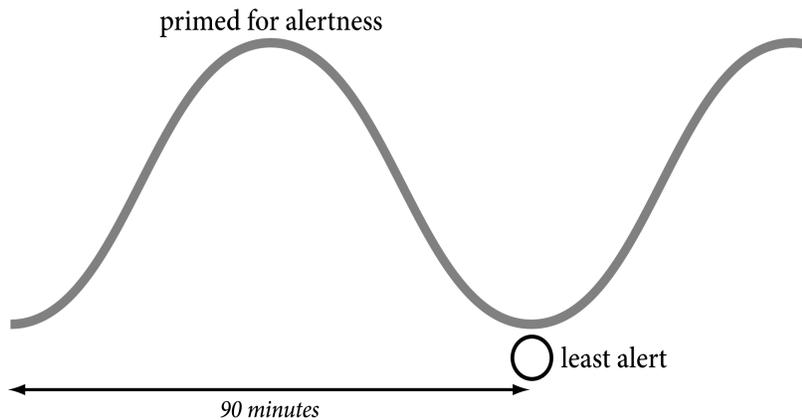


UNDERSTANDING INFANT SLEEP CYCLES – THE BRAC

BASIC REST AND ACTIVITY CYCLE

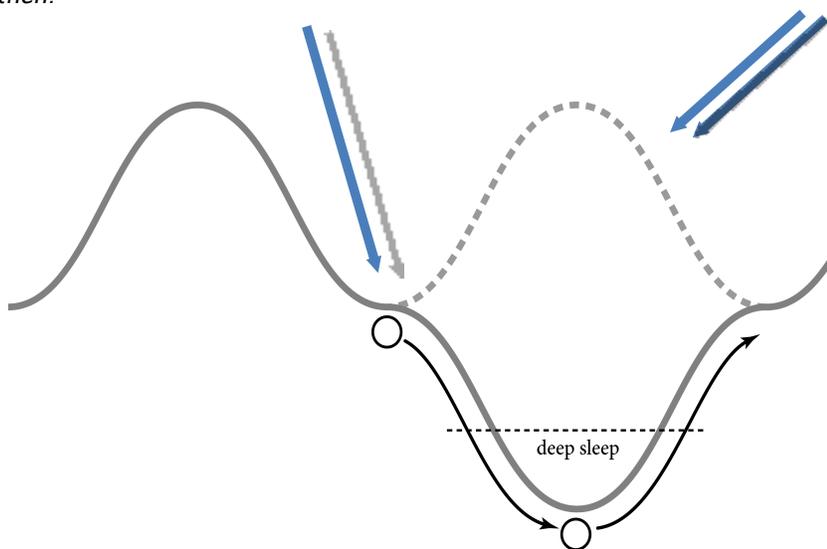


Adults and children have 90-minute rest and activity cycles throughout their waking hours. At night the 90-minute cycles change into light and deep sleep cycles. These cycles are controlled by two hormones: serotonin produces alertness during the day (and is triggered by daylight) and melatonin produces sleepiness during the night (and is triggered by darkness).

INFANTS FROM BIRTH TO ABOUT 4 1/2 MONTHS

It's critical to get Baby to sleep when she hits the moment of least alertness. Watch for signs of sleepiness and get her down then!

If you miss the sleep window Baby will go back into another alert period, though she will be tired and probably very fussy.



Newborns and young infants have alternating awake and sleep cycles throughout the day and night *instead of* awake cycles during the day and sleep cycles during the night. In the first two weeks the *awake* phase lasts about 30 minutes, then in a few weeks becomes 45 minutes, a few more weeks 60 minutes and finally at about 3-4 months 90 minutes.

Baby sleep issues arise because during the first months she moves into and out of deep sleep. The problem is that when she comes up out of deep sleep she *doesn't know how to ease back down* into deep sleep. During light sleep anything that makes her uncomfortable or alert will trigger her to come completely awake even if she is not finished with that sleep cycle. At about 4 1/2 months old she will become able to transition through deep—light—deep sleep just as you do during the night when you turn over and resume your sleep cycles until morning. Ahhh, that means she will be sleeping through the night, and so will you.

Because Baby can't handle the ups and downs of sleep for the entire 90 minutes that her sleep cycle should last, you will have to help her back to sleep each time she wakes until she has slept a full 90 minutes. If you don't do this, she will become sleep deprived, and so will you.