

# HELP!

## My baby won't sleep

With Katie, 8 months, waking every hour, Lucy Dimbylow, 32, from Hertfordshire, decides to try sleep training. Here she shares her diary...

**M**y first baby, Tom, now 6, was a bad sleeper, or so I thought. Then along came Katie. She wakes every 60 to 90 minutes at night, only going back to sleep if I breastfeed her. Naps are equally bad, lasting 45 minutes at best, and the whole family is feeling the strain. I'm exhausted and barely see my husband Ian, as I go to bed at 8pm. Enough is enough – I need expert help. I search online

### GETTING STARTED

**AIM** Reduce Katie's dependence on feeding to sleep

**TOP TIP** Give an 11pm dream feed so your baby doesn't get hungry overnight

Hannah asks me to keep a diary listing Katie's sleeping, feeding and activity times so she can create a tailor-made plan. She identifies that Katie's biggest issue is her reliance on feeding to sleep as I'm often breastfeeding her five times a night.

Hannah advises me to drop all but the bedtime feed, an 11pm dream feed, rocking Katie to sleep and bringing her into my bed. Hannah says these habits will be easier to break.

The next few nights are tough. Rocking Katie to sleep takes up to three hours, three times a night, and every time I put her down, she cries.

By day, Katie's so miserable and clingy that poor Tom's neglected. When I call Hannah, on the verge of giving up, she reassures me this is all normal. She books a home visit for next week to explain the sleep training process.

### NIGHTS 1-4: SLEEPING IN THE COT

**AIM** Get Katie used to sleeping in her cot with a reassuring hand on her chest

**TOP TIP** Don't pat, shush or keep moving position, as every slight change will stimulate your baby

Hannah comes round to talk through the sleep training. Our

and find Hannah Love, an experienced sleep trainer and founder of parent support service Yummy Baby Group (yummybabygroup.co.uk).

During an initial chat she tells me she has a 100 per cent success rate. If she can work her magic with Katie, it'll be worth every penny (from £60 for an initial consultation to £500 for a complete sleep package with 24-hour support).

programme will have three stages, each taking around four nights. Stage one is to get Katie to fall asleep in her bed with my hand on her. I can continue the 11pm dream feed, but otherwise, shouldn't pick her up, talk or make eye contact. Hannah explains that consistency is key and I need to do the same at bedtime, at every waking, and for naps.

Night one isn't as bad as I expect. Katie wakes three times, but each time, resettles within 45 minutes. Night two, however, is hideous. When Katie first wakes, she drops off after just 20 minutes, and I feel triumphant. Then at 3.30am, she wakes again. I keep thinking she's going to sleep, but whenever I move, her eyes ping open. After two hours, I give up and bring her into my bed, feeling like a failure. But nights three and four are much better. Katie only wakes once, and although it takes an hour to resettle her, I'm getting more sleep than I've had in months.

### NIGHTS 5-8: WITHDRAWING CONTACT

**AIM** Remove physical contact so Katie falls asleep with someone just sitting by her cot

**TOP TIP** Consider putting an airbed in your baby's room for this stage, so you're nearby but still get some sleep

On night one, Katie wakes once and takes two hours to go back to sleep, but she's not crying, she's just keeping her eye on me.

Lots of sleep = happy mum and baby



Happy mornings

The next night, she doesn't wake until 3.45am, and resettles within half an hour – amazing!

Then, on night three, it all goes wrong. Katie wakes three times, taking an hour and a half to go back to sleep each time. She keeps reaching out and calling for me. It's heartbreaking, but when I call Hannah in desperation at midnight, she explains that temporary setbacks are common on night three of each stage. She's right. The next night, Katie wakes only once, at 2am, and resettles in under an hour with no contact.

### NIGHTS 9-12: INDEPENDENT SLEEPING

**AIM** Leave the room while Katie is awake so she learns to fall asleep by herself

**TOP TIP** Don't rush in. If your baby is just whinging, give her time to resettle herself

I'm dreading this, but Hannah reassures me that Katie is now secure in her bed, and knows how to self-soothe, so she just needs to get used to me not being there. If she cries, I'm to wait for gradually increasing intervals before checking on her and then leaving again.

The first night is emotionally draining. Katie howls every time I walk out, and I end up in tears myself before she eventually cries herself to sleep, 50 minutes later. I'm guilt-stricken, but if I give up now, it'll all have been in vain. On night two, Katie wakes at 2am, but her cry is indignant, rather than anguished. It takes over an hour for her to settle, but it's far less heart-wrenching.

I brace myself for more crying on night three, but unbelievably, Katie sleeps from 7pm until 5.45am, with just a 10-minute feed at 11pm. On nights four and five, she does the same again. I think we've cracked it!

### ONE MONTH ON

Katie is a different baby. She's sleeping through from 7pm until 6.30am, having dropped the dream feed by herself. If she does wake, I simply replace her dummy and walk out, and she goes back to sleep. By day, she's having two-hour naps, is eating better and seems far more contented.

The real test came when Katie caught chicken pox. After a week of dreadful nights I was sure we'd be back at square one. But once she was better, it took only two nights for her to start sleeping through again.

Throughout the sleep training, Hannah's round-the-clock support helped me stay on track. Ian and I have our evenings back and we've even managed a meal out together. It's been a hard process, but a life-changing one, and our whole family is happier as a result. **PPP**



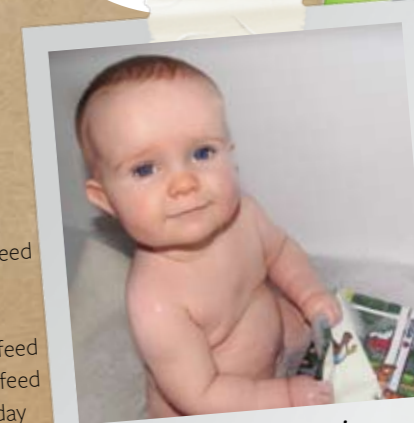
Making progress



11pm dream feed



Less milk and more solids have helped



Bath routine

### SLEEP SAVIOURS

- 1 Work together.** It's important to approach sleep training as a team with your partner and anyone else involved in looking after your baby.
- 2 Introduce sleep triggers.** At bedtime and at every waking, play quiet music and offer a comfort object like a soft toy to show that it's time for sleep.
- 3 Go to bed early** when sleep training, so you have the energy to tackle the difficult nights.
- 4 Be consistent.** The 'try everything' approach will confuse your baby, so keep the same routine at every naptime, bedtime and night waking.
- 5 Have support.** If you try to go it alone, it's hard not to cave in when things get tough.

### KATIE'S ROUTINE

#### BEFORE

- 5.30am Wake up
- 6am Breastfeed
- 7.30am Breakfast
- 9.45am Nap (45 minutes)
- 10.30am Breastfeed
- 12 noon Lunch
- 1.30pm Nap (45 minutes)
- 2.15pm Breastfeed, often falling asleep again
- 4.30pm Breastfeed
- 5pm Tea
- 6pm Bath
- 6.30pm Breastfeed
- 7pm Bed
- 9.30pm Awake, breastfeed
- Midnight Awake, breastfeed
- 1.30am Awake, breastfeed
- 3.30am Awake, breastfeed
- 5.30am Wake for the day

#### AFTER

- 6.30am Wake up
- 7am Breakfast, breastfeed
- 9.45am Nap (45 minutes)
- 10.45am Snack
- 12 noon Lunch
- 1pm Nap (1 to 2 hours)
- 2.30pm Breastfeed
- 4pm Snack

- 5pm Tea
- 6.30pm Bath
- 6.45pm Breastfeed
- 7pm Bed