

The Art of the TRANSFER

Get your sleeping baby into bed without a fuss

During my daughter's infancy, I would make mental to-do lists of tasks I'd get done during her afternoon power nap...only to get stuck in a "nap trap" if my transfer to her crib was the slightest bit clumsy.

Co-founders of Dream Team Baby, a company that counsels tired parents with baby sleep issues, Kira Ryan and Conner Herman say that most of their clients struggle with nap time issues. Follow these tips for mastering the transfer, and maybe you'll get a little rest yourself.

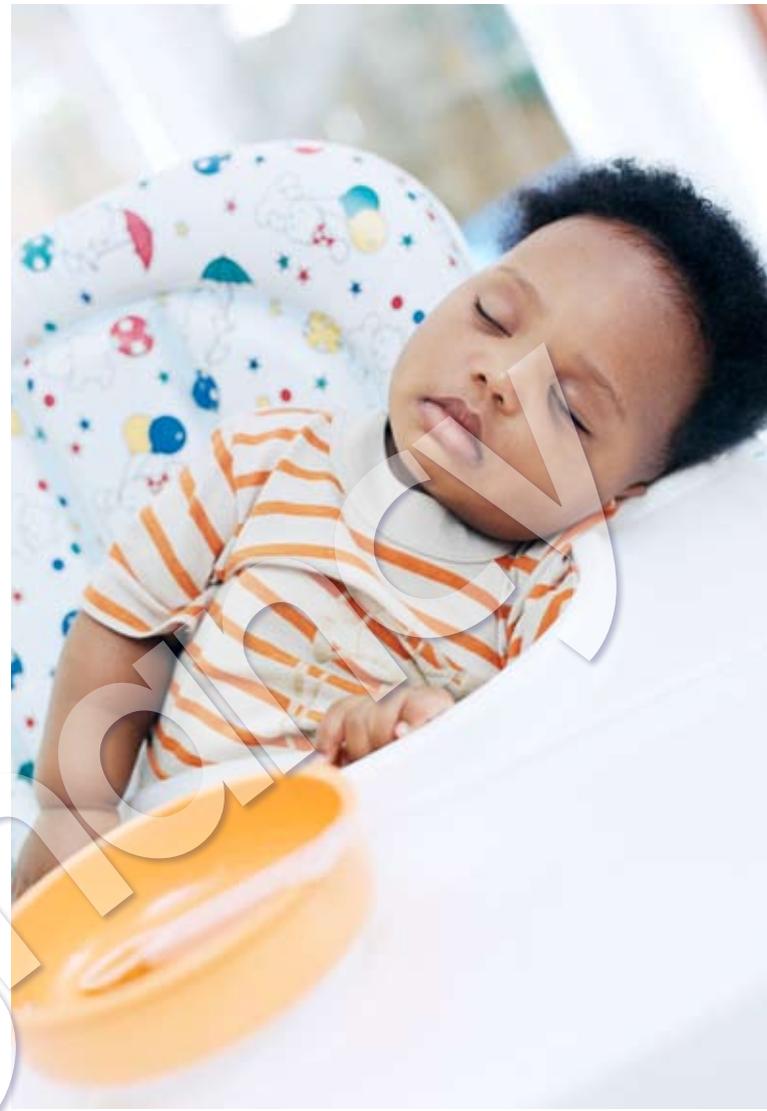
THE BIG CHILL

Infants often abruptly wake up because they feel a drop in temperature. You can counter this by wrapping her in a baby blanket or T-shirt that is "pre-heated" by your body temperature while you're moving her. Note: Newborns should not sleep with a blanket, so keep an open sleep sack in the crib for easy placement during transfer.

It also helps to leave your hands on baby for 30 seconds or so to make the transition less abrupt. "Their little bodies lose a lot of heat, because their physiology is different from ours. A blanket works well because there is enough warmth on it to keep them cozy for those first few minutes when they might wake up," says Polly Moore, Ph.D., director of Sleep Research at California Clinical Trials and author of *The 90-Minute Baby Sleep Program*. Newborn expert and baby nurse to the stars Jean Charles recommends rubbing your hand on the crib sheet right before touch-down to create a natural warm spot for her to settle into.

HABITUAL RITUAL

Herman recommends always following the same routine during the last minute before you put your baby in bed. This will



BY ● VANESSA GENEVA AHERN

send signals to her that she associates with sleep. Los Angeles mom Molly Ludwig says that this works well when transferring her 16-month-old son William from stroller to crib. Wherever she's transferring, she makes a constant "shhh" sound in his ear to mimic the sound of the white noise machine William usually sleeps to.

CREATE THE SLEEP ZONE

A crib can become an infant's archenemy during the day, even if he likes to sleep in it at night. Sometimes this happens when a child is sensitive to daylight or has a hard time winding down. If the nursery is too bright during the day, Ryan suggests installing room-darkening curtains or shades to give your child the visual mood to snooze.

This Is How We Do It

Three moms share their nap-time secrets.

My little darlings fall asleep in the jog stroller during our mid-morning run. Before we leave the house, I close the blinds in their rooms, have their cribs at the ready, music is cued, and favorite lovey and passie standing by. Then I make a mad dash with them to their little haven and they usually continue to sleep.

—Sherry Kaminski, Emerald Isle, NC

My kids were famous for falling asleep in the car just as we hit the driveway. It was a struggle to transition them from the car seat. My solution was to keep a “Mommy’s Box” in the car, filled with non-perishable snacks, a pad and pen, and a book I was hoping to read. This quiet time allowed me to really relax.

—Brenda Umbrianna, Bridgewater, MA

When transferring, bend down as far as you possibly can to snuggle them into your chest. If they happen to awaken, stay very close to their head/face to immediately soothe them and block their view.

—Andrea Vincent, Fairfax, VA

Charles recommends avoiding eye contact and social engagement with your baby during a transfer, as well as during nighttime feedings and diaper changes. Even though it’s hard to resist your adorable little one, this subtle shift in your body language will send a message to the baby that it’s time to sleep, not to play.

BEWARE OF CATNAPPERS

Babies tag along as we zip through errands and love to steal an inconvenient catnap now and then. “Sometimes, catnaps can’t be avoided, but they shouldn’t be the norm. If a baby [3 months or older] has difficulty in transition from being held to anything else, that could be the sign of an under-slept baby,” Moore says. If your baby catnaps in the crib, try offering her an extended nap by keeping her there for an extra 15 minutes after she wakes up.

Ryan says that this will give her an opportunity to go back to sleep. “Many babies actually wake partially or fully at some point during a nap but learn to put themselves back to sleep without parents knowing it,” Ryan says. Another way to stave off a catnap is to save sedentary activities, such as car and stroller trips, for immediately after nap time, and active activities like tummy time and music class for before naps, Ryan adds.

KNOW YOUR BABY

It may be hard to visualize now, but once your little one is born, your maternal instincts will kick in and you’ll get to know her habits and sleeping preferences. Trust your gut, be consistent, and soon you’ll all be getting plenty of sleep, day or night. **P**

Vanessa Geneva Ahern’s writing has appeared in *Health*, *Fit Pregnancy*, and *Complete Woman*. She once let her 6-month-old baby sleep on her shoulder in Starbucks for 2 hours because she was too afraid of transfer failure.