Sleeping through

No such thing as the average baby.
Your child may need between 8 and 14 hours of night sleep (excluding the day time naps a very young child needs). It is okay to rock, soothe or feed baby when new born, but by five to six months they may become dependent upon this and for you to settle them. Observe what is maintaining poor sleep behaviour and remove it if possible, e.g. a dummy.

Everyone drifts in and out from light to deep sleep during the night.

If your child needs your help to settle from light to deep sleep they will need you every time they stir during the night.

Therefore regularly and consistently put infant in his/her bed at sleeping times, still awake. With consistent behaviour on your part, baby should learn his/her new routine within a week.

If awake and crying use ‘Checking System’ technique.

Infants only cry persistently if in discomfort or pain.

It is much more fun to see mum or dad several times a night than lie alone in bed, even if parents do get exceedingly cross.

From ten months onwards it is often attention seeking behaviour.

Therefore be a bore, repeat at five or ten minute intervals - ‘Checking System’ technique.

Keep a sleep diary - a record of each consecutive night as to how long it took to settle. Accept that on the first night of using checking only technique the child could keep up poor sleep patterns for hours but don’t give in. See if there is an improvement over the next few nights. When changing routine try to arrange a ‘catch up’ on your own sleep by organising alternative care for your child during the day for an hour or two.
A GOOD BEDTIME ROUTINE IS ESSENTIAL

1. Set bedtime similar each night.
2. Quieter play beforehand.
3. Milky drink (plus small supper if necessary e.g. biscuit or cereal).
4. Bath, brush teeth and into bed.
5. Negotiate one or two small books to be read with an older child.

CHECKING SYSTEM

This technique is for a well child.
1. Be consistent - both parents.
2. No verbal communication - bland face, no smiling. Do not talk.
4. Tuck firmly back into cot/bed.
5. Walk out.

Leave three to five minutes - repeat nos. 1 to 5.

Then repeat leaving times left between five to ten minutes just to reassure child you are still there.

OLDER CHILD

Do not talk to child or smile, etc. Be a bore.

If you ‘give in’, your child has won and the problem remains. It may take up to one to two hours to settle the first night but look for an improvement over the next few days.

If an older child comes downstairs or into your bedroom, march him/her back into their bedroom using ‘Checking System’, i.e. no verbal communication.

NB If you allow your child to stay downstairs or get into your bed, you are reinforcing (rewarding) his/her pattern of behaviour.

If a child has slept well, reward in the morning. Verbal praise and perhaps, for example, a treat given before breakfast or a promise of an outing. This reinforces good habits.
Some infants will settle with a night time ‘friend’, e.g. Lullaby Teddy by Tommy.

Tell older children that mummy or daddy will pop in and check that they are okay before they go to bed. This action gives reassurance and overcomes any fears the child may have of being abandoned.

If an older child needs your presence to settle them to sleep, try:

1st night  -  Sit on bed
2nd night  -  Sit by the bed
3rd night  -  Sit in the middle of the room
4th night  -  Sit by the door
5th night  -  Sit outside the bedroom door

NB  Remember no verbal communications. If necessary use the ‘Checking System’.

If you change your child’s sleep behaviour from a bad pattern to a good pattern the advantages are:
1  You, as parents, are back in control.
2  Both parents and child are more awake and happier during the day.
3  You can enjoy each other’s company and not be irritable with each other, and your patience, listening, and playing skills will improve.

NB  If there has been an interruption in this technique because your child has been ill, e.g. teething, then the system has to be repeated from the start.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
This leaflet was prepared by Carol Porter RGN RHV BSc (Hons). Illustration by F. Hinton Bac (Hons).