



“A healthy sleeping baby is key to a flourishing family. Our sleep strategy combines medical research with practical routines which assist parents achieve optimum sleep, feeding, growth and happiness in babies and children.

Background series

effects of sleep deprivation

Sleep is essential for every body system. Having appropriate volumes of sleep is fundamental for well-being.

Lost sleep, and the daytime sleepiness that follows, affects our mood and behaviour, personal relationships, work and day-to-day performance may suffer over time. Our attention span, memory and reaction time can all be disrupted by lack of sleep. Self-esteem, self-confidence and harmonious relationships between parents are common casualties of prolonged sleep deficit.

In experiments where animals are kept awake continuously it has been shown that complete sleep deprivation is fatal. In human experiments where people are kept awake for very long times the brain begins to malfunction and the subject loses contact with reality.

While it is hard to define all the details of sleep there are some effects of broken, disturbed and decreased sleep which are beyond debate.

Key points:

- Healthy sleep is vital for healthy functioning for all the family. Simply losing self-confidence and the joy of parenting are huge problems.
- In a five-year comparison of families who had and had not received The Babysleep Doctor care, there were no divorces in the group that had. We can't promise to protect families from divorce, but it is beyond debate that a family that sleeps well is likely to be more stable and provide a better place for a baby to grow and thrive.
- Taking steps to ensure high quality sleep in your baby and children is a fundamental contribution to their long term health and well-being.

“Our strategy is about high quality parenting to assist children to learn the skills of efficient sleep achievement and sleep maintenance.”



Dr Brian Symon is The Babysleep Doctor. He has more than 30 years' experience working with parents and babies experiencing sleep, feeding, growth and/or behavioural issues. He is a specialist medical practitioner with a MD (PhD) in infant sleep. Dr Symon is well published in national and international medical and research journals having researched infant sleep problems throughout his medical career. He is the author of *Silent Nights, Overcoming Sleep Problems in Babies and Children* and has another book due for release in early 2015.

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**The
babysleep
Doctor**
... helping babies to sleep
and families to flourish

“Sleep deprivation puts the child, parent, parent’s relationship with their partner, and parent’s relationship with other children at some degree of short-term risk.”

Background series

effects of sleep deprivation

Adults

Research published in the journal, *Nature*, reported that 17 hours of sleep deprivation was equal to a blood alcohol of 0.05 %. Thus once an adult has accumulated 17 hours of sleep deficit they are functioning similarly to a person who is unable to drive legally.

As a parent let’s assume that in the first year of a baby’s life the mother misses one hours sleep per night. This is a total of 365 hours in that year. In fact there is published data showing that in the first year of a baby’s life mothers in Australia lose between 800 and 850 hours sleep. This is a major insult to the health and well-being of the mother. Just at the simple level of her coordination there are days when her driving skills are as impaired as if she were intoxicated.

There are many other impacts of sleep deprivation. These can include:

- Depression*
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Tearfulness
- ‘Baby brain’ or just plain forgetfulness
- Loss of libido
- Aggression
- Impaired immune systems and being more prone to illness
- Increased pressure upon the parents relationship.

Children

The impact of tiredness on children varies with their age. The follow are things which are known or which we have observed in our consulting.

Babies in their first year

- Tearfulness for no obvious reason. Often mislabelled as wind, colic, reflux, silent reflux, teething and nebulous abdominal pain.
- Decreased ability to achieve or maintain sleep
- Incomplete feeds because of the babies going to sleep during the feed
- Decreased weight gain because of poor feeding
- Impaired growth because of poor feeding.

Babies after their first year

- Tearfulness for no obvious reason.
- Decreased ability to achieve or maintain sleep
- Incomplete feeds because of decreased appetite
- decreased weight gain because of poor feeding
- Impaired growth because of poor feeding
- Decreased confidence with unknown people
- Decreased rates of learning

“Healthy sleep is vital for healthy functioning parents, and children.”

- Delayed speech
- Delayed walking
- A determined character ie. illogical determination
- Limited frustration tolerance ie. poor tolerance of things not going their way
- Increased levels of parental dependence ie. has to be held or attended to excessively
- Emotional volatility with illogical highs and lows
- Emotional fragility with major distress in response to minor insults
- Clumsiness when playing and perhaps excessive bruising
- Development of irrational fears.

In July 2013, the *British Medical Journal*, reported on a study demonstrating the relationship of sleep to brain development in children. Called the Millennium cohort Study, it followed 11,000 children. It showed that children who demonstrated irregular bedtimes up to the age of three were the most negatively affected when it came to reading, math skills and spatial awareness. When followed over time, they continued to lag developmentally even by the age of seven. The authors concluded that the first three years of life seem to be a particularly sensitive time for sleep and its relationship to brain development.

* about 32% of The Babysleep Doctor patients have positive scores for depression at their first visit, reducing by 85% by their second visit)

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