



Dr. Bill Moorcroft



Sleep Problems Update

Number 3

Case Study: Infant Not Sleeping Through the Night

Patient: L.S., 10-month-old healthy male

Problem: His parents described a persistent pattern of L.S. awakening every three hours during the night followed by crying until his mother nursed him back to sleep. At bedtime L.S. was nursed until he fell asleep, then put in his crib. Sometimes if L.S. was real fussy during the night, his parents would bring him into their bed to sleep. As a result, they were very sleep deprived themselves, which was affecting their general child-care ability.

Diagnosis: Sleep Onset Association Disorder (ICD-9 CM 307.42-5). L. S. had not learned to “self sooth” in order to get to sleep because falling asleep had always been assisted by a parent (in this case by nursing).

Treatment: I recommended that the parents stop nursing L.S. to sleep. Instead, I suggested that they put him in his crib when sleepy but still awake, then allow him to fall asleep on his own. I told them that they might have to tolerate (and ignore or only minimally respond to) some crying at bedtime for a few days. I instructed them to continue responding to the night awakenings

as they have been, but they would soon find that they would have to respond less and less as L. S. learned to fall asleep on his own.

Dr. Moorcroft of Northern Colorado Sleep Consultants welcomes referrals for insomnia, nightmares, and children’s sleep problems. He has offices in Fort Collins, Loveland, Greeley, and Boulder.

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Outcome: “Within three nights, he was sleeping through the night,” said L.S.’s mother. “It was incredible.”

This new pattern has continued so his parents are now also sleeping through the night and no longer feel sleep deprived.

Comment: This is a common problem. All babies wake up during the night; that is not the problem. The problem occurs when a baby is unable to return to sleep by themselves. Many parents need to know that it is best to allow their child to learn to fall asleep on their own rather than depend on an adult to nurse or rock them to sleep. This way children learn to easily fall asleep without help whenever they need to, which sets the pattern for good sleep for the rest of their lives.

Did You Know?

The National Sleep Foundation’s Survey on Sleep in America 2004 focused on Children’s Sleep. Three Key Findings from that survey were:

1. Most children of all ages are not averaging enough sleep each day.
2. About 2/3 of children under age 10 are reported by their parents to experience some kind of sleep problem at least a few nights a week, especially –
 - ♦ difficulty falling asleep
 - ♦ nightwakings
 - ♦ stalling and resisting going to bed
 - ♦ snoring, loud heavy breathing, or having trouble breathing while sleeping
3. Having a television in the bedroom and consuming caffeine are common in children and both adversely affect sleep.

All of these are having a negative impact on children’s waking behavior, but are easily correctable.