

# a break from the old routine

SHARLENE POOLE HAS A SUCCESSFUL ANSWER TO A PROBLEM FACING NEW PARENTS TODAY



What I have discovered through my years helping parents with newborn babies is that the most common question causing concern today is routine or no routine?

The idea of routine was, and still can be, frowned upon due to the years that have passed and the mistakes that were made by some of the mothers and advisors of the time. Some of their methods were very strict and regimented which suit some perfectly but can leave others, who are unable to fit into the exact timings, feeling like a bit of a failure. Then we have the other extreme (which is more common today) where parents live each day differently with no set routine, snack-feeding and nap-sleeping their babies. They would like to be out and about, spending more time in cafes and involved in social activities but the babies' demands seem to prevent this.

Looking into why the previous generations did what they did and how they might have made some errors got me thinking – if I took a bit of the “good old ways” and mixed it with a bit of the “new age” it might turn out to be just right! So instead of the strict, one-routine-suits-all theory, such as feeding every four hours, a routine should be based on your baby's health, weight and temperament and the lifestyle of you and your partner. Take advice from family, friends, books and professionals and apply what you believe works in with your lifestyle to develop a routine that is best for you and your baby.

## How to get into a routine

There are no set rules for this. As parents, you need to talk to others and to read and research the needs of a newborn, finding out how much sleep, milk and stimulation your baby requires. Then you need to look at the lifestyle and desires you have as parents and figure out how you can work this in and around the baby's day. This will give you a rough idea on when your day should start and finish and how you can fit everything in between – thereby developing your own routine.

## What does that cry mean?

In the early months, most parents have no idea what the different cries of their baby are and what they mean. You are still getting up several times in the night because the baby doesn't know the difference between day and night and you're unsure if the baby still needs the amount of food they are having at night. This is where routine can help you start to understand your baby's needs. When your baby starts to cry, the time or stage in the day should tell you what they need.

For example, if the baby has been awake for a certain amount of time, has been fed and changed they are now ready for bed. Listen to the sound of this cry – it's the tired cry.

When they wake after a good sleep and start to cry and “root” for food, you know straight away they are hungry, this is the hungry cry.

A pattern starts forming after days of repetitive habits and sounds and you now have the ability to know what your baby's needs are. When you hear a cry you have not heard before and after checking that there are no obvious reasons for this cry, you can confidently seek advice or help from a professional.

## Time for you

With your routine in place, you, as a couple, can ensure you have time together with your baby, but also have time alone while your baby is settled. Simple things like having a meal together and having the time and energy to talk about your day are important for your relationship, and for sharing knowledge that you are gaining each day as parents. When you know what time your baby needs to be fed, bathed and settled, the working parent can plan to be home to take over from time-to-time, which is very rewarding as a parent and for your relationship.

Routine is a process that will help enhance your lives as parents. It is essential in managing the day-to-day workload and helps you cope with unexpected events that arise. ■

With over a decade of international experience, Sharlene has carved out a unique career in child care – specialising as a newborn advisor. Sharlene has an established post-natal care business and continues to work around the world. Due to demand, Sharlene is currently developing a series of DVDs for her international market and will share advice with readers through this column. If you have any questions for Sharlene, see [www.tbonz.co.nz](http://www.tbonz.co.nz) **TBONZ**

[www.littlemiracles.co.nz](http://www.littlemiracles.co.nz) has information on the support options Sharlene provides.



Don't hesitate to seek advice from the professionals – your midwife, Plunket nurse, and your GP are all there to help.