**Sleep Problems And Nighttime Feedings**

Although your baby may give up regular nighttime feedings on his own by the time he’s three months old, do not expect – or insist – that such a young infant give them up altogether, all of a sudden.

But if your child is at least three months old, still nurses or requires a bottle at bedtime, and needs to eat again several more times during the night, then the extra feedings may well be causing the extra wakings. If that is the case, you may be able to help him sleep better by decreasing the number of these feedings.

However, if your baby takes in a substantial amount of food – from extended feedings at the breast, or bottles adding up to more than eight ounces over the course of the night – then he has learned that certain times of night are mealtimes. To eliminate these feedings suddenly wouldn’t be wise or nice.

The amount of milk or juice your child drinks during the night may be considerable. If he finishes four full eight-ounce bottles, that is a large amount for even an adult to consume overnight.

**Solving The Problem**

If you have concluded that excessive and unnecessary feedings at night are disrupting your child’s sleep, you will be relieved to learn that although such feedings can lead to severe sleep disturbances, the problem is also one of the easiest to fix.

Two things need to be addressed. The first is to reduce or eliminate the nighttime feedings to avoid their various sleep-disrupting effects. The second is to teach your child new sleep associations so that he can fall asleep without being held, without eating, and without sucking on the breast or bottle. You can do these things at the same time, or one at a time.

To fix the problems caused by the feedings, start by gradually decreasing the number of nighttime feedings, their size, or both. Just don’t stop the feedings suddenly. A program designed to allow new patterns to develop will be easier for him to follow.

Your goal is to gradually move your child’s feelings of hunger out of the nighttime and into the daytime. Once there is only a single remaining nighttime feeding left, you can choose to stop that feeding right away – instead of gradually – if you prefer, since the total amount of ingested food during the night is now fairly small.

If you are working on sleep associations and hunger patterns simultaneously, put your child in bed as soon as each feeding is over, even if he wakes and begins to cry. If you nurse him and he sleeps next to you, move him off of you when the feeding is done so that he can learn to fall asleep without using your breast as a pacifier. You’ve just fed him, so he is not hungry – now you are only changing his expectation of what happens while he falls asleep.

Within a week, if all goes well, you will have finished cutting down or even eliminating the nighttime feedings. After that, continue applying the technique of progressive waiting at any waking at night (except for feeding times) until the wakings stop. It should not take more than another few days.