

Baby guru to the STARS

Little Treasures welcomes globe-trotting baby whisperer Dorothy Waide to the team

She's been called upon by movie stars and the world's rich and famous to guide them through those turbulent newborn weeks. Now internationally acclaimed newborn nurse Dorothy Waide will share her 30 years of baby wisdom with



Dorothy Waide

In her first column for Little Treasures, Dorothy answers a question many parents ask: Is it okay to let my baby sleep in my arms, or should I put him in his cot for every sleep?

HERE'S WHAT SHE HAS TO SAY:

Most new parents ask me if it's okay to hold their baby while he sleeps. They worry they might be setting up bad habits. I always tell them ... yes, of course it's okay to hold your baby! He or she has been part of you for 40 weeks and needs time to get used to life outside the womb.

All babies are different. Some need to be held, others like to be fed, swaddled and tucked into bed, some like a mix of both.

If a baby needs to be held, I keep the room calm, quiet and still. I don't walk around holding the baby or rock a baby to sleep. They don't need movement, they want warmth and familiar smells. Your voice will stimulate your baby, so don't talk, but engulf your baby with love as you hold him.

I put myself in a relaxed position, if I am holding a sleeping baby I will stay there until the next feed. If your baby likes to be held while sleeping in the early days, it can be hard if you're alone at home. I suggest to parents that they try to get as

Little Treasures readers because, as Dorothy says, whether you live in a Beverly Hills mansion or on a remote Kiwi farm, babies the world over are just the same.

Dorothy trained as a Karitane nurse in Auckland in the 1970s, but since then she's travelled the world in private jets, living in glamorous homes, while she's cared for the newborns of stars like Catherine Zeta-Jones and Michael Douglas; and Russell Crowe and Danielle Spencer.

What's her top piece of advice? "If you can give the first six weeks after the birth completely to your baby, then you will have built good foundations for the rest of her life. It's better to hibernate at home, enjoy your baby and get to know her than to socialise around the clock in those first six weeks."

much done as possible in the mornings, so they can hold the baby in the afternoons when they are often harder to settle. There is always a small window after a feed when a baby is happy to lie on the floor – so put on your racing shoes and get things done!

When there's a newborn in the home it's time to slow down and hibernate. If you're always "busy, busy" then your baby will react to this. If you want a calm baby, then you need to have a calm environment.

How do you teach your baby to sleep? Most newborns are up for an hour and then will need sleep. They are easily stimulated and will not fall asleep if you are playing or talking to them. Babies won't magically nod off when they are tired. You need to teach them to sleep.

After the baby has been up for an hour I swaddle them and put them to bed. If they cry I pick them up and hold them, especially with a baby under six weeks. I pat them on their bottom or back, say "sssh, sssh" and turn them into my chest



Dorothy Waide with Catherine Zeta-Jones

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so they are basically tummy or side sleeping with you. Once they are asleep you can try putting them in the crib, however if it's been hard to get them to sleep I will often hold them until they wake for their next feed. In the beginning it is about teaching them to fall asleep and stay asleep, rather than where they sleep.

Once they have learned to sleep in your arms, transfer that to the cot. This is usually at around six weeks. I put them in the cot and then start sleep training. My usual pattern is to leave them for three minutes, comfort, three minutes, comfort, and then pick them up and put them to sleep in my arms or give them the dummy. As they get older the crying period increases to what I feel the baby can manage. I usually start this around six weeks. If you leave it later than 12 weeks it's going to be very difficult to get them to go to sleep in their cots.

Much of what you do with little babies is like stepping stones, steadily moving in the right direction a little at a time.