



Cherish the First Six Weeks: A Plan that Creates Calm, Confident Parents and a Happy, Secure Baby

By Helen Moon

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From baby nurse to the stars, Helen Moon, a step-by-step plan to managing sleep and feeding issues to survive--and enjoy--the first six weeks of your newborn baby's life.

Have you ever wondered why celebrities look so rested in such a short time after giving birth? The answer: baby specialists like Helen Moon. A baby specialist and professional nanny for the past 25 years, Helen has worked closely with hundreds of families, including some of Hollywood's biggest stars.

Helen knows that the first six weeks of a baby's life--when parents tend to be nervous, siblings are needy, and new babies need immediate and constant attention--has a huge impact on the entire family. Getting a baby on a sleeping and eating schedule is an achievable dream, and it's not a mystery. Helen's step-by-step plan shows new parents exactly how to integrate their baby into the family so that she will be able to sleep when she's tired, eat when she's hungry, and calm herself when she's fussy--self-regulating skills that will enable her to thrive for the rest of her life.

Assured that their babies are secure and happy, parents can confidently enjoy this most precious time of their baby's life, trusting their own instincts, and--most importantly--sleeping through the night themselves!

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Editorial Review

About the Author

HELEN MOON is a certified baby specialist with over 25 years of professional experience. One of the most exclusive childcare experts in the US and UK, Helen has appeared on the reality series *Scott Baio is 46 and Pregnant*.

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Chapter 1

Why the First Six Weeks Are So Important

Have you ever wondered why celebrities don't seem stressed or sleep deprived, and they look so good after giving birth to their babies? In addition to the benefits of private chefs and in-home personal trainers, celebrity moms usually hire a baby specialist like me!

Now, it's your turn to learn all my inside tips for caring for your newborn. I may not be able to come to your home and guide you in person, but I can share with you all my years of baby and parenting wisdom, practical advice, and tried-and-true shortcuts. Since babies don't come with instruction manuals, the next best thing is a book that will make your baby's first six weeks as smooth and comfortable for both baby and parents as possible.

As a baby specialist and professional nanny for the past twenty-five years, I have worked closely with hundreds of families in England and the United States, and I can comfortably say that I have probably seen--and heard--it all. There's nothing like getting involved in the first six weeks of a baby's life to understand the huge impact that this short time period has on both the entire family and a child's entire life. Parents tend to be nervous, siblings are needy, and new babies need immediate and constant attention.

I can remember vividly the first day I walked into actor Andrew McCarthy's house. Neither Andrew nor his wife had had a great deal of experience with babies before, so they looked to me for guidance at every turn. We quickly established a feeding routine to benefit their new little boy, and we worked together to reset the baby's nocturnal sleep cycle, gradually teaching the baby to sleep more at night and less during the day.

Like any couple, Andrew and his wife, Carol, were full of questions: "Is he eating enough? Is it normal for him to be pooping so frequently?" And my favorite, "Is it normal to have a contented baby who is eating well and sleeping well?"

I remember vividly Andrew actually commenting on the fact that he hadn't watched so much TV in his life, as we all sat together and watched the first series of *The Bachelor*. He was so relaxed; watching television was a pleasure, and not something he thought he would have time to do.

I think it was at this point that Andrew turned to me and said, "You need to write a book! I don't know how we would have done this without you!"

That was about ten years ago, and I am finally writing that book--for you.

In this book, I will share with you a nurturing yet practical approach to caring for babies that will show you exactly how to put your infant (or baby) on a sleeping and feeding schedule in the first week and how to help your child (or children!) sleep through the night as early as six weeks old, as well as realistic suggestions that will ensure that everyone else in the family will also get enough rest.

My plan, which I refer to as **CHERISH**, will show you exactly how to get your baby on a sleep and feeding schedule that will become a template for the rest of her infancy and beyond, giving her the foundation of how to sleep when she is tired, eat when she is hungry, and calm herself when she gets fussy--all of which will help her self-regulate, enabling her to thrive for the rest of her life! With these life-long skills established, you are able to rest assured that your baby is secure and happy; you, in turn, can comfortably and confidently enjoy this most precious time of your baby's life, not to mention sleep through the night yourself!

WHY SIX WEEKS?

Why are the first six weeks of a baby's life so crucial? Because in that time period it's not only possible but also absolutely crucial for parents to put into place a feeding routine and a sleeping schedule that, in essence, can help regulate your baby's internal body clock, his ability to calm himself, and other foundational aspects of physical, emotional, and social development. Does this sound too good to be true? Well, it's not. It's absolutely possible, and I'm going to show you how.

Yes, the days, weeks, and months after your baby is born are a beautiful, thrilling time period, but it's also a time when many parents panic and stop thinking for themselves. One of the first things I do when I meet a new family is reassure the parents that they already know a lot about what it takes to be good parents: we are all born with an innate understanding of what our babies need. Unfortunately, parents often second-guess themselves, listen to others instead of themselves, and then make themselves crazy with worry and anxiety. These doctors, friends, family members, and even respected experts are all well-meaning, and often their counsel is well-founded. But together their input often becomes a jumbled mess of conflicting advice and a new parent in near panic mode cannot make sense of any of it. I recently had a famous singer-turned-fashion designer ask me when it was okay to introduce her baby to cereal. Her baby was more than five months old and was showing very clear signs of needing more than just milk. But when she asked her pediatrician if she could start to offer her a little cereal, the pediatrician stated that if you give a baby cereal before she is six months, she will be prone to obesity!

The mom immediately decided that she couldn't possibly feed her baby cereal now--even though her instincts were probably more accurate. In this case, with her baby only a couple of weeks away from being six months, and clearly growing well (she was already 16 pounds), it would have been just fine to feed her cereal a couple of weeks early.

When I was growing up in the 1970s, and even as late as the 1980s, our parents fed babies cereal at three months, and sometimes even earlier than that. At that time, it was a common misconception that putting cereal in your baby's bottle helped her sleep longer. One grandmother told me that she put cereal in her son's bottle when he was just two weeks old!

Giving cereal to newborns is dangerous, as their little digestive systems are not yet developed enough to handle more than breast milk or formula. On the other hand, I don't believe that feeding babies cereal before six months is what has created the obesity epidemic; that has arisen from lack of exercise and overeating

processed food.

One of the primary characteristics of the CHERISH approach is to learn to pay attention to the needs of your baby, so that you can follow your instincts, think for yourself, and turn to accurate, reliable information about your baby's health when necessary.

The good news is that how you approach your baby's first weeks or months does not cause a lot of stress or require extensive thinking, but it does ask you to plan a little and stay calm a lot. What does that come down to? Be organized and don't panic! The more you are able to stay calm, the more likely you will be able to pay attention to your baby's cues, stay in tune with your newborn (or baby), and understand his needs. Is your baby hungry? Tired? Complaining because he's wet? Fussy because of gas?

Babies are not all that complicated, but when parents are sleep deprived or feel insecure about what to do, they can easily get confused, overwhelmed, or both. My approach to taking care of your baby is designed to make you feel calm, confident, and self-assured, so that you know exactly what to do; so that you and your baby can sleep through the night; and so that you won't spend twenty out of twenty-four hours each day worrying that there's something wrong with your child--or your parenting skills. I want you to be able not only to enjoy this glorious time of your new child's life but also to do so while laying down the foundation for a predictable, healthy sleeping schedule, good eating habits, and an overall well-adjusted child.

A LITTLE ABOUT MY TRAINING

My expertise in childcare is based not only on my real-life work with all sorts of families but also on my extensive training and professional development in the areas of infant childcare, sleep, nursing, and nutrition in both the UK and the States. I have a strong educational background in childcare, having completed in 1985 the prestigious English nanny training course NNEB (Nursery Nurse Examination Board) certification. The two-year college course covered all aspects of childcare, from childbirth to seven-year-olds, including development, education, psychology, sociology, nutrition, and much, much more.

The unique aspect of this course was its invaluable amount of hands-on experience. It's one thing to be told what to do, and quite another to actually do it. We spent time on a maternity ward working with new moms, sometimes also in the delivery room. We went into a home placement to understand what it meant to be a nanny. We spent every other week in either a nursery school or an elementary school.

This hands-on form of training prepared us for what to truly expect when working with new babies and young children. During this whole process, we were continually assessed on our performance, were tested frequently on the knowledge we gained, and had numerous tasks to complete. By the time we were certified, we had acquired all the skills needed to provide excellent care of both babies and children--which is why a trained British nanny is so highly regarded.

Since I've been in the United States, I have kept up with my training and attended the University of California, Los Angeles, and completed its Certified Lactation Educator Program, just to ensure I had the knowledge to assist moms with breast-feeding.

So how does this background distinguish me from all the other experts out there? Although I know a lot about child development and infant health issues, I am not a doctor. I'm a baby specialist. I have (and give) hands-on knowledge gained from years of taking care of babies ten to twenty-four hours a day. This

experience has enabled me to understand how all children are different, how they fall into similar patterns of behavior, what they need, and what they can do without.

I've also become a parent specialist. Don't get me wrong. I think you, as the parent, will always be the person who knows your child best. However, in my twenty-five years of taking care of children, I've found that much of my time and expertise is focused on helping parents realize that they are the ones in charge and that they are the ones in the best position to respond to their babies.

For example, I recently worked for a single dad who had had a baby through surrogacy. We had a very intense first week together, as I accompanied him to the hospital and spent the first three days of his daughter's life with him, in the hospital room. I showed him all the basics, first explaining what to do and then letting him do it himself. When the baby woke at night, he was there with me, watching and learning. Then we went home and continued the routine we had established. I was so impressed to hear him explain to his parents the difference in his daughter's cries when she was just two and a half weeks old!

Another family called me when their baby was two weeks old. They were distraught and exhausted, explaining that all their baby did was cry, night and day. They had tried everything, and asked everyone they knew for advice. In two short weeks, they had attempted breast-feeding and three different types of formula. The first thing I did was to take the baby, swaddle her, and just gently calm her by talking softly and letting her know everything was going to be okay. I then turned to the parents and asked a series of questions about what they had been doing, so that I would know what bad habits were already in place. For instance, I wanted to know how she slept and where. Were they using a pacifier? Were they swaddling the baby? Why had they changed formulas? How was mom's supply of breast milk?

Then I laid out the plan for the next few weeks. We went back to breast-feeding, and I showed mom how to understand that her baby was eating enough. We gave the baby a good bath, as in their sleep deprivation they had not managed to do this. By the end of the week, we had a relaxed baby who was sleeping three to four hours during the day and four hours at night. And we had two much more confident parents, who looked to me as their savior. However, that wasn't the case: I just gave them some basic information and techniques, and showed them to trust in themselves.

As you can see from these stories of babies and their families, some of what I do is simple hand-holding until the parents feel confident and comfortable taking care of their children on their own. Sometimes this process takes two weeks; sometimes it takes just two nights. For other families, especially those who have a lot going on, managing jobs, older siblings, and other daily logistics, this can take a month or two. I will say this: most parents love having me around, but I feel most rewarded when I leave, because that means the parents have reached that place of confidence and inner calm that is so helpful when responding to babies. If I've done my job well, the family members wave good-bye, with smiles on their faces.

WHAT'S ATTACHMENT ALL ABOUT, ANYWAY?

We've all heard about the importance of attachment, that somewhat abstract yet absolutely necessary bond that needs to develop between a parent and a child (or caretaker and child), and that enables a baby to feel safe, secure, and loved. When a child's needs are met regularly, when she feels cared for and, yes, loved, she is more likely to follow a schedule and will respond well to a parent (or caregiver's) signals for a routine.

Attachment does not come from jumping up for every little squeak, or from never putting your baby down,

or from sleeping with your baby all night long. Attachment develops naturally when parents stay attuned to their baby, learn how to meet his needs, and understand that it's up to them to teach the baby how to fall into a sleeping and eating schedule. Sometimes I think we should change the word parent to "loving teachers," and the teachers in the school should be called "educators." Then maybe more parents would understand that their role is to guide and encourage and explain to their babies and children what they need to learn. Remember, a baby is not born knowing how to comfort himself or how to regulate his sleep; it is up to you as the parent to guide your baby.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jeffrey Lockwood:

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