



Nap Transitions: The 3-2 Nap Transition

Now, let's talk about the 3-2 nap transition. This is a tricky one and can be particularly challenging.

This nap transition usually happens when the baby repeatedly refuses to take his third nap OR the baby's wake windows get too big to be able to fit all three naps into the schedule without bedtime becoming incredibly late. This transition usually happens between 7 and 9 months of age. It's ideal to hold onto three naps until the baby can be up for 3 hours between nap 1 and nap 2 without getting overtired. It's also ideal if the baby's second nap ends after 3:30pm. This way, you won't be stuck giving your baby an incredibly early bedtime to avoid overtiredness. A bedtime before 6pm is definitely NOT ideal because a full night's sleep will get you a 5 or 5:30am wakeup! Yikes. Avoid that. If the second nap is still ending before 3pm, I'd still squeeze in a third nap around 5pm or 5:30pm if you can.

Here's a sample schedule before the transition:

3-2 NAP TRANSITION

Sample Schedule Before Transition	
6:30am	Wakeup
8:45am - 10:15am	Nap 1
12:45 - 2 :15pm	Nap 2
4:45 - 5:30pm	Nap 3
7:30pm	Bedtime

Here's a very common scenario. The baby begins to fight the 3rd nap, but really isn't ready for a 2 nap schedule because he can't be awake for longer than 2.5 hours of wake time throughout the day. A possible solution is to cap the duration of the second nap of the day so that there's still time to squeeze in a third nap.

Here's an example to show you what I'm talking about. Take a look at this sample schedule on the left.

3-2 NAP TRANSITION

Possible Scenario:
Baby Fights 3rd Nap and Isn't Ready for a 2 Nap Schedule

The Problem		The Solution? Cap the PM nap!	
6:30am	Wake up	6:30am	Wake up
8:45am- 10:15am	Nap 1	8:45am-10:15am	Nap 1
12:45-2:30pm	Nap 2	12:45pm-1:45pm	Nap 2
5:00pm	Failed nap 3 attempt	4:15pm- 5:00pm	Nap 3
6:30pm	Bedtime (overtired baby!)	7:30pm	Bedtime

This baby takes two fantastic naps and then refuses the third nap. By the time you quickly feed this baby and get him to sleep for the night, he's been up for 4 hours before bedtime and is definitely overtired. Here's the solution: keep baby's morning wake time and morning nap

time the same, but cap the duration of the second nap so that it's only 60 minutes long. This way, she's still getting a longer nap in the afternoon, but it's not AS long as it was beforehand. And most importantly, you're able to squeeze in that third nap before bedtime and avoid overtiredness. Sometimes, we need to cap both naps to ensure we can squeeze in that third nap for a bit longer.

Another possible situation you can find yourself in is when your baby has gone on a third nap strike. He needs that nap but just refuses to take it, no matter how much you cap those first two naps. It's not an ideal situation, and if you find yourself in this specific situation, you have no choice but to transition your baby to a proper 2 nap schedule.

So here are two examples of schedules you can see once your baby has gone through the transition to 2 naps.



3-2 NAP TRANSITION

Time to Transition!

Sample Schedule #1 Right After Transition		Sample Schedule #2 Right After Transition	
6:30am	Wake up	6:30am	Wake up
9:00am-10:30am	Nap 1	9:30am-11:00am	Nap 1
1:30-3:30pm	Nap 2	2:15-3:45pm	Nap 2
6:30pm	Bedtime	6:45pm	Bedtime

If your baby is one of those babies who is still too young to pull off a 3 hour wake window between nap 1 and 2 as well as before bedtime and you're stuck doing a bedtime before 6pm to avoid overtiredness, that's fine. It's not ideal but it's better than keeping him up for too long before bedtime. This might be a bit messy at first, but it'll get better

once your baby gets a bit older and you can extend those wake windows, which will push bedtime later.

Here are my top tips for navigating this nap transition:

Tip#1- When your baby is ready to be taking two naps, begin pushing the morning nap later. When your baby was taking 3 naps a day, he may have been napping as early as 8:30am for his first nap of the day. The problem with an 8:30am nap for a baby on a two nap schedule is that the day is bound to end very early, necessitating a very early bedtime. For example, let's say your baby naps from 8:30am-10am and naps again from 1pm-2:45pm. If your baby can only be up for 3 hours before needing to go back to sleep, you'll be stuck doing a 5:45pm bedtime, which is just too early. In order to shift your baby's whole schedule later, you want to begin by shifting your baby's morning naptime from 8:30am to 8:40am to 8:50am to 9:00am to ideally 9:15am-9:30am. Then from there, allow the rest of the nap times to naturally shift later as well.

Tip #2- Implement an earlier bedtime to avoid overtiredness in order to a) help the baby's body adjust to sleeping less during the daytime; and b) protect the wake window before bedtime. Remember that if the baby is awake for too long between the end of the last nap and bedtime, you'll have an overtired baby on your hands. And most babies going through this transition can't be awake for longer than 3 hours before bedtime.

Tip #3- As I mentioned before, it's perfectly acceptable for your baby to need 2 naps on some days and 3 naps on other days. This is a very normal part of the transition. So if your baby gives you shorter naps one day, offer her that third nap.

Tip #4- And my last tip- be patient with this one. It's very normal to experience a bit of early rising when your baby goes through this transition and adjusts to a different schedule, so hang in there and

remain consistent. If your baby has good sleep habits to begin with, this transition shouldn't be torturous for too long!