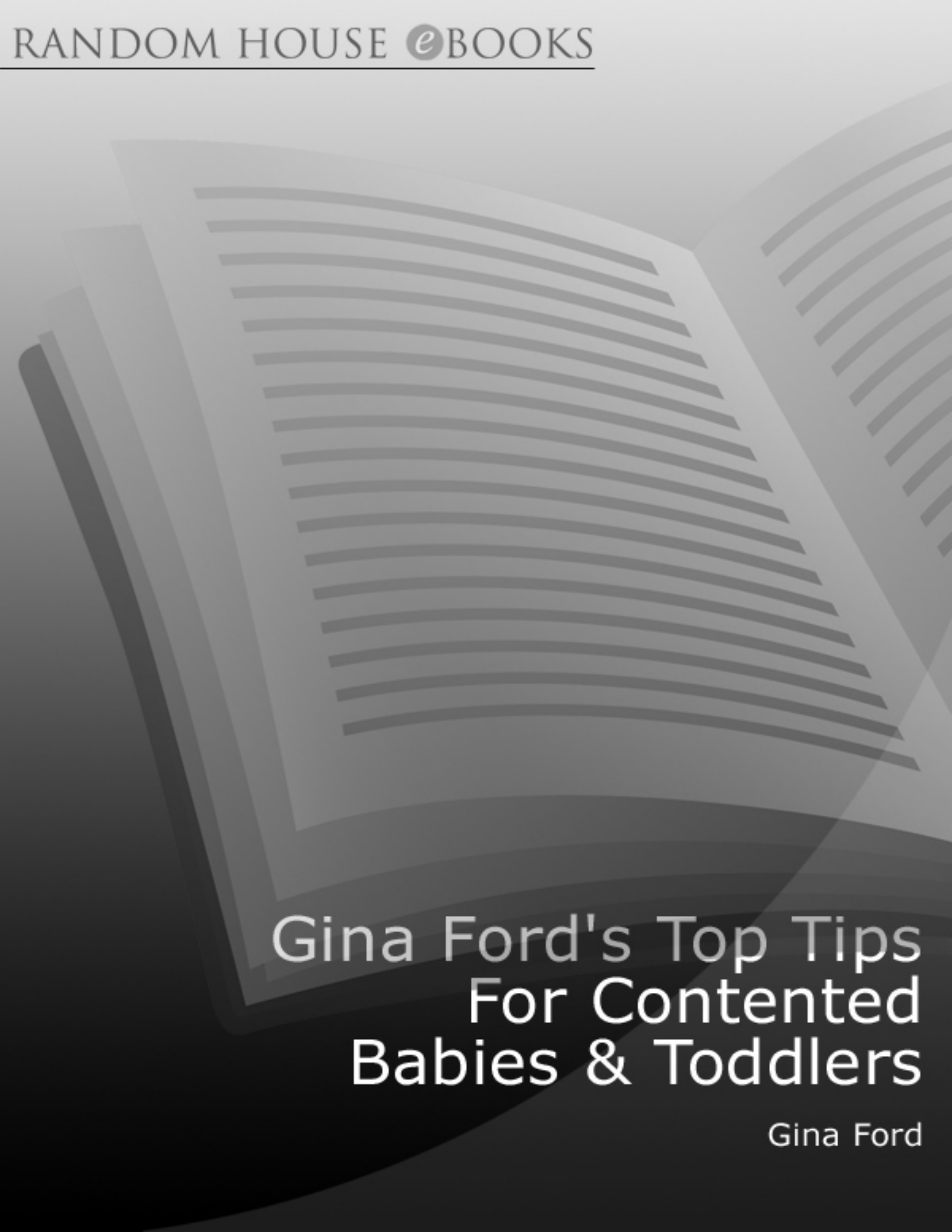


RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Gina Ford's Top Tips
For Contented
Babies & Toddlers

Gina Ford

Contents

Cover

About the Book

Title Page

Introduction

Sleeping

Milk Feeding

Weaning

Potty Training

Behaviour and Habits

Safety

Copyright

About the Book

Britain's bestselling childcare author offers you her top tips for guaranteeing happy, healthy little babies ...

Parenting is a tough business and whether you're a first-time parent or an old hand, there are always hurdles to be overcome. Gina Ford guides you through the key stages of baby and toddler care, including sleeping, weaning, feeding, potty training and behavioural development, with her invaluable, sound and practical advice on parenting. Her handy, easy-to-follow tips mean you can quickly and easily learn how to:

- deal with common problems such as fussy eating, nightmares and tantrums
- feed your baby successfully and encourage good eating habits for life
- help your child walk, talk and dress themselves

And much, much more!

Gina Ford's
Top Tips
for Contented Babies
and Toddlers

Gina Ford

Vermilion
LONDON

Introduction

I wrote *The Contented Little Baby Book* to pass on what I'd learnt during my career as a maternity nurse and child-care consultant to parents who were desperate for a successful way to look after their babies. Many new parents, I discovered, were finding demand-feeding and sleepless nights distressing and destructive to family life, and needed help. I wanted to answer that need and pass on what I'd come to believe in over the years. Letters and calls from thousands of parents have told me how much my methods have helped them when they have been at breaking point. Of course, my approach might not suit everyone, but I know it can help relieve the stress and confusion of early parenthood, and has done so for many mothers and fathers.

My experience of babies and children is based on a career giving hands-on, practical advice, and seeing at first hand how a contented little baby and child greatly enhances the enjoyment of their early years for the whole family. I developed my methods through living with families in a variety of homes and helping them get to grips with parenthood. My routines are based on a firm belief that, with a sensible, practical approach, those early years need not cause the many sleepless nights and all-round exhaustion that beset some parents. Those who are already familiar with my methods will know that I am a great believer in consistent routines for babies and children, and I cover many of the topics in *Top Tips* in more detail in my other books. This book is a concise insight into my methods, covering all the areas of raising a baby and child, including sleeping, feeding, weaning and potty training. It's a quick, practical guide for those mothers and fathers who would like to know what makes a contented little baby and

child. I hope it provides some help and inspiration for those parents who need it.

Gina Ford

Note: For simplicity's sake, the baby or child is referred to throughout as 'he'.

1

Sleeping

SLEEPING IS ONE of the main preoccupations of new parents. How much does the baby sleep? How long are the sleeps? How often does he wake during the night? Nothing can prepare you for the intense work that your new baby will entail, and for the exhaustion that can follow from constantly interrupted nights. The sooner a baby is able to sleep through the night, the better for the whole family, and I believe that with persistence and careful planning, there is no reason why this shouldn't be possible from a young age. Sleep deprivation in children is a serious problem these days, and starting healthy habits young is, I think, one of the ways to solve it.

Nothing in my methods involves depriving a baby of anything; rather, they concentrate on learning to anticipate a baby's needs long before the crying and sleepless nights set in. If a baby has got into a routine of excessive night-time waking, it is possible to guide him gradually into better sleeping habits. The tips that follow are designed to help parents quickly and practically. (You can find an in-depth discussion of sleep in *The Complete Sleep Guide for Contented Babies and Toddlers*.)

Parents always ask me what it is I do with my babies in the night to get them to sleep so well. The answer is always the same: very little. I try to establish a routine in the early weeks and make sure of some simple things: that the baby is sleeping neither too much nor too little during the day; that he is not overstimulated; that he does not learn to depend on sleep associations, such as rocking, feeding and

being walked about; that he is fed enough in the day and at the right times so that he does not need to wake in the night.

BASIC GOOD SLEEP PRACTICE

There are several things you can do to make sure that you have the best environment to encourage good sleep habits in your child.

- Most importantly, a well-fitted black-out blind to ensure complete darkness in the nursery.
- It is important for a baby to have his own space for sleep times. Whether it is in a nursery or in a corner of your bedroom, establish a place designated for sleep, away from the hustle and bustle of everyday activities. This helps the baby to relax and be happy in his own company.
- The ideal room temperature is 18°C (64°F). An overheated room is not only a contributor to cot death, but can dry the mucous membranes of the nose and make a baby very uncomfortable.
- Keep the cot or bed away from the radiator, window or outside wall.
- Bedding and clothing should be 100 per cent cotton. Quilts, bumpers and pillows should be avoided as they can cause overheating. If you are swaddling during the first month, reduce the layers of bedding accordingly.
- Keep the bedding clean and the room well aired and regularly vacuumed. Also vacuum the mattress, which must conform to British safety standards (BS1877 and BS7177), be clean, firm and fit properly.
- Simple cotton sleepwear is best; avoid buttons at the back, collars and fancy ribbons, and remove any irritations, such as loose threads or stiff labels. The best design is a sleepsuit that fastens under the legs.

- During hot weather pull blinds down during the day to keep the room cool, or use a fan, taking care that it doesn't blow directly on the baby or sit within reach of a child. Make sure the baby is not overcovered; very little is needed to keep a baby warm in excessively hot weather.
- The best way to check if a baby is too hot or too cold is to feel the back of his neck. Having done that, adjust clothes and bedding accordingly.
- Babies can sometimes wake themselves up by twitching or jerking (this is called the Moro reflex), and in the early weeks swaddling and firm tucking in can help to overcome this.
- Toys, activity centres and mobiles should all be removed when a baby is asleep. Not only can they wake the baby up if he moves on to them, but they can be confusing. Establishing the difference between sleep times and wake times is one of the keys to helping a baby sleep well. Later, toddlers can take a favourite toy to bed with them.
- I don't encourage bed sharing for two main reasons: the first is safety and the second is sleep association. Experts are coming to the opinion that the risk of suffocation is greater when a baby sleeps with adults, and I advise that a Moses basket next to the bed or a cot with a detachable side is the safest way to have the baby near you. Sleep associations can lead to a baby being unable to sleep alone, and dependent on the presence of parents.
- The safest position for a baby to sleep in is on his back, and firm tucking in will help him feel comfortable and secure in this position.
- Never allow your baby to fall asleep in the house in his outdoor things; always remove hats, mitts and coats.
- Never allow anyone to smoke near your baby or in the baby's room.

- Ensure that toddlers, young children and animals are kept out of the nursery.
- If you are feeling at breaking point, it is better to put the baby in his cot for five or 10 minutes while you recharge than to risk falling asleep with him on the sofa.

Darkness and sleeping

In my opinion, the key to night-time sleeping is daytime sleeping, and absolutely vital to both is darkness. Here I differ from many other experts, but in my experience, teaching the baby the difference between time asleep and time awake is best achieved by making sure that in the early days he is put to sleep in a dark room for most of his naps. Research has proved that the pineal gland produces a natural substance called melatonin, which works as a sedative. The release of this hormone is stimulated by darkness and prepares the body for sleep.

All babies come into a light sleep after 45 minutes, and even the smallest amount of light can be enough to prevent them from settling themselves back to sleep.

Tips for creating a peaceful nursery

- Make sure the room is in complete darkness by using black-out blinds and eliminating chinks of light above and below the curtains.
- Make sure that the door is closed and there is quiet.

WHY IS MY BABY NOT SLEEPING?

These are the main causes for a healthy baby under one year of age waking excessively during the night.

Hunger. A baby who has not fed enough during the day will be harder to settle, and will be likely to wake at night needing more.

Not feeding enough at each feed. In the early days a baby can need at least 25 minutes on one breast. If the baby's milk feeds are reduced too quickly when solids are introduced, he will begin to wake in the night genuinely needing a milk feed.

Sleeping too much during the day. A baby will settle to sleep only if he is tired and ready to sleep.

Not sleeping enough during the day. Overtiredness can make a baby fight sleep.

Overstimulation. A baby needs a proper period of quietness and wind-down to prepare for allowing himself to go to sleep.

Waking himself up. Babies under six weeks have a very strong Moro reflex, and can wake themselves several times a night by suddenly jerking. To avoid this, swaddle the baby in a lightweight stretch cotton sheet, or tuck in firmly.

Getting cold. Older babies often kick their covers off and become cold, or can get their legs caught between the bars of the cot. A sleeping bag will prevent this.

Wrong sleep associations. If the baby is used to being fed, rocked or given a dummy to get to sleep, he will need the same assistance to resettle himself in the night when he wakes.

Outside disturbance. Parents who leave the nursery door open or leave a night-light on are more likely to be woken

several times a night.

The first things to look at in every case are the most important: feeding and daytime sleeping.

Feeding

Your baby could be waking up simply because he is hungry. Nearly 80 per cent of the sleeping problems that I have to deal with between the ages of six months and one year are caused by the feeding patterns not being right. I often speak to parents of older babies who are still waking and feeding two or three times a night simply because they are not getting enough to eat during the day. By the time they reach nine months, a vicious circle has been established. The baby will not eat enough during the day because he is having milk during the night, and he will not sleep at night without the milk because he has not had enough to eat during the day. Obviously, young babies must never be made to wait for food when they are hungry, but it is also important that you understand your child's nutritional needs and that you structure his daily intake according to age.

Tips to structure food and sleep

- To avoid excessive night feeding, a baby under six weeks needs to have at least six feeds between 7am and 11pm. A baby aged between six weeks and six months needs four to five feeds between 7am and 11pm.
- It is also important that a baby gets enough to eat at each feed. In the early days most babies need a minimum of 25 minutes on the first breast, and a baby over 3.5kg (8lb) in weight should be offered the second breast.