

Thankfully, a friend introduced me to the idea of scheduling before my first child was born. I was intrigued with the idea, and it seemed to make so much sense (helping to establish a routine hunger metabolism). I had watched other moms seemingly feed their babies all of the time, never knowing when their little time bomb was going to go off, and I loved the idea of feeding becoming somewhat predictable. My sister was one of those, with her first children, but after seeing how well this worked, she also changed to schedule feeding with the rest of her children. I wanted to be the one to put my child on a routine, not my child.

### **When did you put your children on a schedule and how did you go about doing it?**

I put my babies on a schedule right away. As soon as we came home from the hospital with my first, then in the hospital with my others (because I saw how well it worked). Basically I nursed them every 3 hours from the beginning. If they woke up at 6am, my schedule would then follow a 3 hour cycle (i.e. 6, 9, 12, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm) After their last night feeding, I would then let them wake on their own (even if it went longer than 3 hours—which it did). I would feed them when they woke in the middle of the night, and amazingly, they all slept through the night very early on. The morning feeding always set the schedule of the day, and I could always adjust what time we began. Typically, after they were fed, they would be up for a while, then sleep until the next feeding. If they woke early, or became fussy before their "scheduled" time, I would either hold them off either with a pacifier, holding them, or if they were really inconsolable I would just feed them a little early. (Although it may sound very "scheduled" you definitely have to use wisdom and grace at times.) On the opposite note, there were times during the day when my baby was sleeping soundly and it was "time" for a feeding. I would then wake them up. This may sound cruel to a sweet sleeping baby, but it is important—you are setting their little internal clock.

### **What worked well and what didn't?**

I honestly didn't have many problems. My girls all took a pacifier, so that helped "holding them off" when I needed to. I loved the predictability this offered in my infant season! Typically you don't hear the words "predictability" and "infants" in the same sentence, but scheduling their feeding truly made it predictable. I knew when they needed to eat, therefore I could schedule Drs appointments, outings, errands, etc. around their schedules. Sometimes they would wake up early, say 5am, and their typical schedule was 6, 9, 12 etc.. I would feed them at 5, then again at 6 (although they wouldn't eat much), this at least helped us stay in our well-fit routine! Or if I knew I needed to do something at a specific time later that day, I would then adjust my baby's feeding schedule to accommodate that.

### **How did putting your children on a schedule serve your children, your marriage, and you personally?**

Putting our babies on a schedule has served our entire family. First, the baby knows what to expect—and when. This results in a more contented baby. I also saw the peace it brought to our family as each new baby was welcomed. Each baby was a blessing and gift that become included into our family, as opposed to our family all revolving around

the baby. This served my husband and I as well. I could feed the baby, then we could go out on a date, and I knew that she'd be fine until the next scheduled feeding. This also served my mom (who was our primary babysitter), because she knew what to expect as well. The biggest benefit was for me personally, I think! As a new mom, it helped give me confidence to know what my baby needed. If they were fussy prior to a feeding, it was typically due to something other than feeding. It took a lot of the guess work out of "am I feeding them enough?" I also loved being able to schedule doctor appointments just before a feeding, so that I could nurse just after the shots, or knowing that I could go to the grocery and my baby wouldn't need to eat in the middle of my errand. I knew somewhat of what to expect. (obviously, that is not always the case; teething, sick child, simply a fussy day, etc).

**What advice would you give a mom-to-be about putting here baby on a schedule?**

Stick with it! As a new mom, it truly will help restore peace and order in your new life! Putting a baby on a schedule brings a sense of security to the child, as they life become regular and consistent. Don't get discouraged it seems hard at first (holding off a crying newborn until it's time to eat). It really pays off, once that baby's little system gets into a routine.

**Can you describe your schedule for your babies/toddlers?**

Typically for a newborn it was feeding every 3 hours, followed by "wake time" (playing, swing, walks, bath), then nap time. The 3 hours was from the time I started nursing until the next time I started. I kept the 3 hour schedule (sometimes stretching to 3 1/2) up until the baby was sleeping through the night (7-8 hour stretch), which they were all doing by about 8 weeks. The time between feeding gradually increased, and at about 13 weeks I was feeding them every 4 hours. After they would be awake for a while, and I knew they were getting sleepy, I would lay them in their crib, and let them fall asleep. This also was so important in training them to fall asleep on their own. Eventually this led to eating 3 regular meals, and they would drop to only a morning and afternoon nap, then just the afternoon nap.