**Debunking Baby Care Myths: Truths Every Parent Should Know S5|131**

Welcome to this week's exciting episode of Sense by Meg Fora. Today we have one of my favorite themed podcasts. It's our myth versus fact episode and we've done these a couple of times before and they are so much fun.

In the noisy world of parenting advice it can be super challenging for you as a new mom to separate fact from fiction. And that's why today Tove is going to be interviewing me all about some of the most common baby care beliefs and we'll be helping you navigate through the maze of information out there. We'll tackle intriguing questions like do babies really need complete silence to sleep well? Does teething cause fever and diarrhea? Should you ever wake a sleeping baby? Is there a perfect age to start solid foods? Do babies need daily baths? Should breastfeeding moms avoid certain foods to prevent colic? And does starting solids early help with sleep? These are just a few of the myths and facts that we'll be exploring today.

So whether you're a new parent or an experienced one this episode is packed with valuable insights to help you to make informed decisions about your baby's care. So get ready to bust some myths and confirm some facts as we delve into this enlightening discussion. Don't miss out on this opportunity to enhance your parenting knowledge so that you can parent with confidence.

Welcome to Sense by Meg Fora the podcast that's brought to you by ParentSense the app that takes guesswork out of parenting. If you're a new parent then you are in good company. Your host Meg Fora is a well-known OT, infant specialist and the author of eight parenting books.

Each week we're going to spend time with new mums and dads just like you to chat about the week's wins, the challenges and the questions of the moment. Subscribe to the podcast, download the ParentSense app and catch Meg here every week to make the most of that first year of your little one's life. And now, meet your host.

Hi everyone, my name's Tevae. Anyone who's a regular listener will have probably come across a podcast or two that I have done with Meg. I am on here somewhat frequently.

I have three children under the age of six and so I have a lot of questions every time I think I have the parenting journey somewhat waxed. One of them reminds me I know nothing. So I am here today with Meg to unpack some myths and facts.

You know, I think as a parent there's just this consistent conflicting advice on Dr. Google, on the web, on LinkedIn, on social media, on people we follow. And I thought today would be a really fun episode to kind of look at some of the big questions that parents have to ask. And figure out if they're myths or facts, Meg.

Wonderful, Tevae. I always love these episodes with you. And of course, it's always so real because you bring your own stories from your own kiddies as well.

So I'm excited to get into this. All right, so I'm going to go first. So one of the questions that is a burning question for me and I'm going to put my hat on when I was a first time mom was you should never wake a sleeping baby.

Now, as a first time mom, I was like, absolutely not. If the baby is sleeping, never wake them. As I've gone down the journey, that has somewhat shifted.

But I'd love to know myth or fact. Yeah, it's a very good question. So I mean, I'm of the belief system that you don't wake sleeping babies as much as you can because sleep is everything.

But you're right. There are actually times when you do need to wake a sleeping baby. And the circumstances when that happens are, first of all, if they are born premature or if they are not gaining weight shortly after birth, you probably will be told to wake your sleeping baby in order to feed them.

So there is a time in which the medical professional, your health care professional will tell you that. So that's the fact. The other side of it, though, is that sometimes you get told to wake your baby three hourly for feeds for months and months.

And that I don't believe in. So as much as possible, let your baby sleep at night unless you've been told to wake them because they're not gaining weight or they're prim. That's the one circumstance.

The second circumstance is if your baby is sleeping too close to bedtime. Yes, the danger nap. Yes, if they sleep too close to bedtime, they then won't settle at bedtime.

So how do you work that principle out? Basically, what you do is you take the time that you want your little one to go to sleep. So let's say it's seven o'clock at night and you subtract from that time the awake time for their age. So if maybe it's a three hour awake time, if they're an older kind of 11 month old, it might be three hours.

Then you add a little bit onto that, like almost 10% onto that. And that makes it up to kind of three hours, 33 and a half hours. And then you know that you do not want them sleeping three and a half hours before bedtime because they will not settle at night.

And what's quite nice is if you use the awake times plus 10% and you subtract that off bedtime, depending on your baby's age, it could be a very short amount of time or if they're much older, much longer time. So as an example, your baby who is six weeks old should have a 60 minute awake time. And for those little ones you add on 6%, you've got about 17 minutes approximately.

So about an hour and 10 minutes before bedtime, which is seven o'clock, you would then be waking them. So at least by 10 to six, you will have woken them from that last nap of the day. So that's the second circumstance in which it's perfectly reasonable to wake a sleeping baby.

And then the last time is that if you've got a child who has got a terrible routine of sleeping in until like 10 or 11 in the morning, I know it sounds weird, but those babies do happen. And then very often with moms who are putting their baby to sleep at 11 o'clock at night when they go to bed and their baby's feeding throughout the night and then kind of ends up suckling on the breast at about six in the morning and eventually at 10 o'clock in the morning, mom's having to get the little one up. And I mean, 10 is probably a little bit of a bad example, but certainly you've got moms who at eight or nine in the morning are having to get their little ones up.

Now, when that happens, you really are disrupting their circadian rhythms because it is better to go to sleep earlier, sleep until about six or seven in the morning and then wake them then. So that would be the other circumstances if a little one is sleeping later than seven or eight in the morning, I would actually be waking them. And yeah, and Meg, how does that, I feel like I'm just going on a bit of a tangent here, but now how does that impact bedtime? So those that have like really, really big naps in the day.

So let's say I don't wake my sleeping toddler or my baby and I'm just like, hey, you nap till your heart's content. And like three hours later, they wake up. And so we put them, do we then add that 10% and put them into bed that much later? Yeah, you would need to do that because otherwise they won't actually settle.

I mean, nursery for me is the perfect example, right? You go to nursery, say don't let my child sleep more than an hour. You pick them up and they're like, they had a three hour nap today. And you're like, what? Now I'm trying to do the math to go, well, what time do I put him to bed? Because he had a three hour nap.

No, that's a hundred percent. And that is super risky because of course at nursery, they're just chucked. If a little one is sleeping, it's one less life to take care of.

So those are the nightmares. So you definitely don't want to have them sleeping too long. And certainly by the time they're two years old, you don't really want them to be having more than an hour and a half of a midday nap.

And so you will wake them from that obviously as well, which is a very good point. Thank you. Okay, starting solids.

Does this help my baby sleep better? Myth or fact? As a mom, I was definitely led to believe that if I fed my baby solids, they would sleep. So I was super excited about the solid journey. Absolutely.

Great one. It is a myth, complete myth. So actually starting solids is not associated with babies sleeping better.

Babies can wake at night for nutritional reasons, especially if they are not gaining weight well, or if they've got specific nutritional deficiencies like an iron deficiency. But actually it really doesn't make a massive difference. And it also doesn't make a difference if you feed them in the evening that they're going to sleep better at night.

That just doesn't work. So don't think that solids are going to be that magic wand that is going to make your baby sleep through. Having said that, if your baby is looking very interested in solids, is sitting upright, not completely by themselves, but supported, and they've started to suddenly wake more regularly at night, it is worth thinking about introducing solids because what it does is it gives you a certain amount of a runway to actually get up to the quantities and the type of nutrients that are going to potentially help sleep a little bit.

But by and large, food and sleep are not as linked as people actually think it is. And I mean this, I'm going to take this back to a toddler journey and maybe you can shed some light on this because my son is definitely going through a stage of, you know, he has found his independence and his voice. And it's like being a chef in Gordon Ramsay's kitchen where I'm like constantly being yelled at by someone who is either throwing their food on the floor and is not happy.

And so I've now taken the stance that he gets the option of a meal. If he doesn't try it, then he gets no meal and he goes to bed. And there's been a few nights where he's gone to bed hungry.

And my husband and I constantly have this debate where he is like, well, this is going to be our problem. We're going to be up all night because he's going to be hungry. So you're quite comfortably, I can walk away from this and say, well, actually that's not true.

It's such a great illustration because you have a certain responsibility with his feeding and he has another responsibility. Your responsibility is a lot of food outings in the day. In other words, five opportunities for him to eat in the day, breakfast, lunch and supper and two snacks.

That is your responsibility. When it is and what it is, is also your responsibility. So approximately five snacks, nice and nutritious and healthy.

His responsibility is whether or not he wants to eat it. Oh, yes, that's very clear. Exactly.

You're not going to get into a food battle. So if he decides not to eat his dinner, instead of panicking, look back and go, okay, let's just be rational. Let's think about today.

And actually, let's think about the whole week. And most of these little ones will have probably have eaten breakfast quite well, had quite a nice snack in the morning, a little bit less for lunch, less in the afternoon snack and nothing for dinner. And that is absolutely fine.

Do not force feed him. If you then, what you might find is that sometimes they then go to bed and they just can't settle. And there's nothing wrong with an evening, kind of almost like a little toddler milk as they go to bed.

And yeah, and look, I mean, there's lots of different trends of thought. And some people don't want little ones to have milk at all after they're a year of age and no bottles. I'm a little bit more relaxed about all these things.

So I think if they've got a little bit of a gap in their tummy and they need a little bit of milk, which has got lovely tryptophan in it just before they go to sleep, then that's fine. They can have some milky rooibos tea or a bottle of milk before bed. Okay, great.

Well, I'm going to, I have recorded this so that I can give it to my husband when we have this debate. He's like, you have to give him something. Give him cereal, give him anything.

So it's good to know. Right, because we're on the food journey, I think let's stay here. So next question, baby should start solid food at exactly six months.

Now I live in the UK. And so the UK is like, you do not feed your child before six months. If you do, you know, were they going to call social services on you? So where does that sit? Yeah, that's myth.

That's old fashioned news. And it's not research based. So, I mean, I don't know who sat around a table and randomly went, right, six looks like a good number.

Six months old, all babies can wean. It's of course isn't that. And neither is it four, you know, four months, all babies can wean.

It certainly is actually neither of those things. What it is, is that you should be weaning your little one when they are ready to be weaned. And they're showing you the signs, which is that they're very socially interested.

They're engaged with you while you are eating. They are sitting almost upright, which means that if you put your hands on their waist, they're upright, their top body actually comes upright. They've got enough extensive turn, their chin is off their chest.

And then they maybe even start to reach the food on your plate. So those are the type of things that we're looking for. And that usually does not occur before about four to four and a half months.

But certainly by the time our little ones are hitting six months, we do want them on some solids at least. And the reason for that is not because there's a magical thing that happens at six months, but it's because from six months onwards, if you haven't introduced solids before that, they tend to become more picky because they're just going into a more picky phase. So you almost want to catch them in that exploration window.

And I'm sure all the moms know that like at four months, your baby's putting everything in their mouth. If they can get their hands, their feet, your sunglasses, your phone in their mouth, they're putting everything in their mouth. And so it's a good time when they're starting to explore to just start to introduce it.

And it also doesn't have to be X amount of quantity. It can be a very small amount, even like a lick of hummus of a carrot is fabulous. Just experimental and self-feeding.

Okay, great. Yeah, I mean, I was very on the money with your book with Gray at four months. Jagger was slightly slower, like six months.

And Nova, I completely forgot about. And so I think she was like six, seven months. Well, she might have even been two months.

I don't know. Third year, just like, what? She was eating food at some stage, but I definitely left her a little later purely just because I'd like forgotten all the noise. Now, this is like a firm favorite question of mine because it constantly comes up and that's teething.

And I feel like your children, when you're in the trenches of that age, are like constantly teething. They're teething for like three years. And you just feel like they're always teething and any sign of something going wrong, oh, it's the teeth.

They're not sleeping. They have a rash. It's teething.

They've got a fever. It's teething. They've got diarrhea.

It's teething. So to like put it in a question, does teething cause a rash, fever and diarrhea? This episode is brought to us by ParentSense, the all-in-one baby and parenting app that helped you make the most of your baby's first year. Don't you wish someone would just tell you everything you need to know about caring for your baby? When to feed them, how to wean them and why they won't sleep? ParentSense app is like having a baby expert on your phone guiding you to parent with confidence.

Get a flexible routine, daily tips and advice personalized for you and your little one. Download ParentSense app now from your app store and take the guesswork out of parenting. Does teething cause a rash, fever and diarrhea? Yeah, it's a really good question.

So what teething does cause is more drooling. So that piece we do know. Babies like to get their hands in their mouth because their gums are a little bit itchy and their mouths just feel slightly different.

So they're producing more mucus and more drool. And that drool does cause runny tummies and it causes a terrible smelling poo as well. Yes, it's like iron.

So it's not that they've necessarily, they haven't got a diarrhea bag as such but they have got a different nappy. So let's not call it diarrhea, let's call it a different nappy but the smell will be a telltale sign, like it stinks. So that it does cause.

Because of that drool, you can get a little bit of eczema and dry skin around the mouth. So yes, you can get a reaction around the mouth that is not related to, for instance an allergy of something they're now eating but it's just related to the amount of drool. So have a look at how much drooling is going on when you're piecing this all together.

The fever piece is different. So sometimes you'll get a slightly elevated temperature, not a fever. So a fever is kind of 38 degrees and more and little ones are really poorly with that.

They don't feel well, they're very uncomfortable, they're niggly and they really don't, they're not well. And when that happens, that's not teething. And I think many a mom has been caught with that, that there's been a bit of a smelly nappy, this kind of mild fever and she's absolutely convinced that her baby's actually deathly ill and they really aren't.

If your baby is running a big fever though, that's not teething either. And a nappy rash? Yeah, also same thing. The drool creates the kind of acrid smelling and some very acidic smelling poo.

And so it does create a nappy rash. So the question is, is this a fact or myth? I'm gonna go middle of the road because actually it's kind of is a fact that some of these things are created by teething or caused by teething, but certainly not a hardcore fever and illness. Okay, that feels aligned with my journey as well.

Okay, I can get that. Okay, next one. Breastfeeding mothers need to avoid certain food to prevent colic.

Now my journey as Grey was super, had like a lot of gut challenges. And so I ended up reading thousands of breastfeeding books on what I couldn't eat, wasn't allowed to touch, couldn't go near. And so my sense is yes, but I, again, like every book I read told me something different.

Isn't this the conundrum of parenting because there's too much information and you don't know what to trust. So actually what we found is that changing things in your diet doesn't make a difference by and large. So for about 90% of babies and moms, leaving out onions and broccoli and cabbage is honestly not gonna make a difference.

And those are the three common ones that you'll often get told that they create the ones. So that is in actual fact a myth, but there is some truth in dairy sometimes and some allergens just because it obviously passes through milk. And so what we do find is that sometimes if a baby does have a cow's milk protein allergy and the mom is having cow's milk protein in her diet, then it can cause the baby to be more niggly.

So for that reason, if you've got a very colicky baby, I will never tell a mom to cut out the green leafy vegetables and onions, but I will recommend to her to have a five day break of all dairy. And that's totally cold turkey just for four days. So you can use alternate milks and cheeses, but you can't use anything with dairy in it.

And that sometimes makes the shift. But for all the rest, it really is nonsense. There's absolutely no proof on it at all.

And in actual fact, I find it very counterintuitive because it's hard enough to produce breast milk. We all know this. Definitely, now you're taking all the stuff that actually helps you produce.

Everything's gone. And what gets left behind are actually highly processed carbohydrates and sugars. And actually sugars may actually cause a little bit more niggliness and like high, high sugar diets may cause a little bit more niggliness.

So, you know, I mean, and that happened to me. I excluded absolutely everything. And because I was starving, I was eating like a packet of M&Ms and like a bag of sweets every single day.

That's what became my diet. And in actual fact, I was doing completely the wrong stuff for James. So yeah, don't cut anything out of your diet unless you've been advised to and usually it'll just be dairy.

And can I ask about nuts? Where do nuts fall in that journey? Because that seems very divided in the forums. Yeah. So again, in an ideal world, if you are not allergic to anything, in pregnancy and in breastfeeding, you should eat as much of allergens as possible.

Lots of nuts, lots of fish, lots of dairy, as long as they're not reacting to it, wheat, all of these things. And the reason is that it passes through our breast milk and it kind of micro doses our babies and allows them to learn to actually... It gives them exposure and allows their body to know, actually, this is a safe substance. And so we actually find that babies who have had exposure to, as an example, nuts in pregnancy and in breastfeeding are less likely to have allergies with the obvious exception that if the mom is allergic, she is clearly not going to eat anything that's going to cause anaphylaxis.

Okay, the next one. Now, this was a big... What was it? Like a social media frenzy in the celebrity forum with what's it? Ashton Kutcher and Mila Kunis, which was, do your babies need to be bathed every day? Definitely not when they're little. In fact, in the early days, they really are so clean.

And so what I normally recommend is that the babies get wiped down on the day that they're born just to take away a little bit of the blood. But actually the vernix, which is that white waxy coating, should just be left on. So don't wipe that off because that helps little ones to self-soothe and it's good for their skin.

And the first bath should probably be about a week after you've left hospital. You can do your first bath. Sometimes if you're anxious, you might want to do your first bath in the hospital and then leave it for another week.

And that's also absolutely fine. So do a bath on night two or night three and then not again for the next week. And then after that, just bath in the days when you're feeling sane, your baby's not too niggly.

And if they're always niggly in the evening, bath in the morning and then just do it intermittently. The only thing you need to make sure of is that you're cleaning their bum nicely, you're cleaning their face nicely, and you're getting into those little folds in their neck because otherwise the milk curds go there. So you don't need to bath your baby every day.

Having said that, I do love bath time routines and I really believe that they do help little ones to sleep better. And so certainly from about six weeks onwards, I like a bath time to be part of an evening routine, except on nights when, you know, too many things have happened in the day and your little one's too niggly. So up until six weeks, definitely not every night.

From six weeks onwards as part of a bedtime routine, absolutely fine. All right, and let's talk about toddlers. Do we bath them every night? Because they're very stinky and dirty.

Yes, you do, you do. You know, and look, I mean, I'm sure it's very personal. And actually there's certain cultures that bath twice a day, but in my culture, so let's say that this has a cultural veneer on it.

In my culture, yes, we do like to bath. I bath myself every day. I like to have my kids clean.

And so bathing daily for toddlers is important. But there are also those days, and we certainly did this with our little ones, where you just put a shell in the garden, one of those big tub shells. You don't take your eyes off them because they can drown and you do bath time out in the garden.

Nothing wrong with that. Literally a bucket in the kitchen as well. Just throw them in.

Anything that keeps the sanity. In summer, we like to use the pool as well. We do like a family swim in the evening.

Absolutely. That's it. Absolutely.

Okay, you know, sleep is a massive thing for the first 100 years of your children's life. What feels like 100 years, because it's such a rarity. And so I feel like we need to cover some of the sleep questions, right? So babies need complete silence to sleep well.

That's a myth. Yeah, so that's a myth. So actually, for very obvious reasons, while they're in utero, the world is very noisy in actual fact.

There's the gurgles, there's the heart beat, they can actually even hear what's going on outside of your body. And so they get very used to sleeping with noise. And when they're born, putting them in a nursery where they are like 50 meters away from the closest human being and they don't hear a single piece of noise probably isn't the best thing because they're probably going to be more likely to wake up.

And that's why people often say my newborn sleeps better when I've got her prim in the lounge where we're all sitting rather than when they're in their bedroom. Having said that, long term sleep can actually alert babies, particularly as they get older, which means that it's not great for sleep habits. So we do want to move them towards silent sleep.

So what you can do for that is in the early days, just have things like white noise playing in the background or leave their door open so that there's some noise from the bedroom or from the lounge. Background TV noise, that type of thing. And then as they get older, I do think for toddlers, complete silence is a good idea.

And I'm not talking about deathly silence because obviously life happens around a house. But certainly having quieter spaces is a good idea. Okay.

I use, I mean, I go to sleep with audio books. And so I've done that with my kids. I'm always not sure if it's the greatest idea because now they always have an audio book on.

But I don't know, I find it's like a sleeping pill for me. Just kind of helps me regulate my mind. Very interesting.

Okay. So last one, babies should sleep through the night by three months old. Oh, big myth.

Big, ginormous, fat lie. It's not even a myth. It's just a lie.

It is a lie. And, you know, I mean, I think there are babies who do and they do exist. And I mean, my middle child, yep, my middle child was one of those.

She was a settled baby and she did sleep through very early. But it's by far not the norm. Most babies are still waking at least once at night at three months.

And usually it's kind of between two and five in the morning. And then the bad news is, is that sometimes as they approach four months, it actually becomes twice at night. So like at one and four.

And so that's very, very typical. So anybody who's telling you that your baby should be sleeping through the night by three months of age, that is not true. By six months of age, I'm starting to expect little ones to only have one waking in the early hours of the morning.

So like about five or six in the morning and hopefully they sleep through till then. But even with that, having said all that, is that more than 50% of babies are still waking up at some points, not every night, but at some points through the toddler years. So, you know, you've got to keep your eye around it.

Oh yeah, my son has all of a sudden went from sleeping through the night. Now he's in a bed. He's like, hey, this is a jewel.

I'm going to come and visit you at least once or twice a night. Of course. And I hope, are you using the camping mattress for that? Well, you know, it's interesting.

I was going to actually ask you because we actually make the effort to take him back to his bed every night, but it is a lot. I know, yeah. And you wake up and then you've got to get yourself back to sleep.

And the one o'clock one, I don't mind. It's the three o'clock one that kills me. So, you know, it's interesting with all three of my kids, we had a camping mattress.

It wasn't terribly comfortable. It was just kind of between a camping mattress and a yoga mat, a little kind of one centimeter thick mat that was underneath our bed. And when they came through at night, I would pull it out.

I wouldn't bring them into my bed simply because that, I think, really can be a long term entrenched habit, which I didn't want. Some moms are happy that there's no, there are no rules with this one, but I just didn't want it. So then I would just pull out the little camping mat next to the bed, go and get their pillow and their duvet and let them sleep down.

And then as they got a little older, what I would do is if they did come through, because they wouldn't do it every night, but if they did come through, I would send them back to go and fetch their duvet and pillow. And I think at some point they were like, hmm, I don't know if this is really worth it. I'm actually not going to bother because I knew that I'd send them back to go and get their duvet and their pillow.

But we always had that. And you know, Tavea loved it because, I mean, even through into the teen years when they watched those horror movies that they really were not supposed to be watching, yes, they would come through and there was no embarrassment or scarm about it. It was just no problem.

You know where the camping mattress is? Come sleep next to my bed. And I'd kind of lie my arm out of my bed down on them and they could hold onto my hand and we'd all go back to sleep. Yeah, because I feel terrible.

Like I said to my husband, like I definitely have some PTSD around kids in the bed because my sister slept in my mom's bed when she was like 16 and it just felt very weird. So Davey and I are like, that's not a journey we want to take. Yeah, it's personal.

But sometimes I'm like, shame. He just wants to cuddle. And now I'm like, go back to your bed.

I'm like carrying him through. Yeah, you know, there's nothing, all three are good. Good to bring your little one into your bed.

If that's your sensory load, let them come in your bed and sleep with you, no problem. The only thing I say about that is that don't expect that now you're nine months pregnant, you can now suddenly put in place a boundary around that. So as long as the boundary is always going to be that they can stay in your bed, perfect, go for it.

And they will grow out of it. They won't stay there forever, but they will, you know, it'll take time. My sister was 16.

So what can happen? The other option is obviously the other end of it is right. Every night, I'm going to get out of bed. I'm going to walk them back.

And you've got to be one of those moms who's got some serious holding there because I just couldn't have the willpower for that. And then for me, I don't know. I'm a bit of a lazy mom.

Pull out the mattress, sleep next to me, no problem. And they outgrow it. They really do it.

It's not forever. It's for a period of time and it's not forever. And there were times when we had two kids, one on each side of the bed, one on his side, one on my side, and that was also fine.

So, you know, it passes. Well, that is quite sweet, though. I always wonder, I don't want him to think that he can't come into our room.

And so you use the boundary. You say, you know, you always go back to the ABCs. Acknowledge.

I know you want to come into mommy's bed. Well, I know that you're feeling scared.

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