

4-month regression playbook.

It's not a regression — it's permanent maturation of sleep architecture. Mature cycles + new wake-window length = the disruption you're seeing. Here's what to do, what to avoid, and the timeline.

WHAT CHANGED

Until ~4 months, babies sleep in 2 stages (active + quiet). Now they shift to **4 stages including REM and deep NREM** — adult-style sleep architecture. They wake fully at the end of each ~45-min cycle and have to learn to resettle without help.

HOW LONG IT LASTS

2-6 weeks for most. The architecture change is permanent; the disruption is temporary. By 5-5.5 months, babies who've learned to link cycles independently sleep longer stretches than they did before the regression.

THE 3 THINGS THAT ACCIDENTALLY MAKE IT WORSE

MISTAKE	WHY IT BACKFIRES	DO THIS INSTEAD
Adding a feed at every wake	Reinforces feed-to-sleep association at exactly the moment baby is learning to link cycles independently. Feed becomes the only resettle tool.	Feed once or twice a night max if needed. Use a brief presence + pat-shush at other wakes.
Earlier bedtime to "catch them up"	Bedtime is already approximately right. Earlier = waking earlier in the morning, which fragments the night further.	Hold bedtime steady. If overtired, bring it 15 min earlier — not 60.
Bringing baby to your bed	Hard to undo once started; AAP advises against bed-sharing with infants under 12 months for SIDS reasons.	Pull crib into your room (room-sharing recommended through 6-12 months) — gives proximity without the safety risk.

The 7-day plan: (Days 1-2) Hold the schedule you had — don't change anything. (Days 3-5) For each wake, wait 2-5 min before going in; respond with brief presence not feed. (Days 6-7) Most babies have linked at least some cycles by now. If you're seeing zero progress at day 14, talk to a pediatric sleep consultant.

What this looks like when it's working: baby wakes, fusses for 2-10 min, falls back asleep without you going in. That fussing is the cycle-linking happening. By day 7-14 the wakes either stop or shorten dramatically.