

modus operandi – it's because both started out as maternity nurses, which is essentially a live-in nanny for newborns. Their careers involved looking after babies from the moment they were brought home up until they were feeding well and sleeping soundly through the night.

Now, these experts aren't doing the rearing, but handing down their knowledge to mums in need. For Sharlene Poole, a six-hour in-home session is usually enough, although 24-hour stints are sometimes called for.

"I don't think mothers should be going it alone," she says. "Naturally, we should be living in small communities – with mothers, aunts and grandmothers all supporting one another.

"When I'm called in, I'm playing the sister, the nana, the nurse – 'the everybody' that all new mums should have access to."

## NO ONE SHOULD STRUGGLE

For both these women, it's sad and frustrating to see mums lying on cushions on the floor waiting for babies to fall asleep in the early hours, or finding women with back problems from bending over babies' cots for hours at a time each day and night.

The consequences are more wide-reaching than people think. Studies have shown sleep-deprived mums can feel isolated, alone and too tired to turn to those who can support them. Lack of sleep can also hinder coping skills, and lead to anxiety and depression. It can even cause weight retention in new mums.

Sleep-deprived babies don't fare much better. There's evidence to show babies who sleep longer are happier and have longer attention spans than poor sleepers.

If Jo Tantum is to be believed, none of this sleep-deprivation is normal or necessary. As she says in her book, "I've never failed to get a baby sleeping through the night. They can't all have been 'naturally' good sleepers. The fact is that you can teach any baby to sleep through the night and you can do it in the first few weeks of life: good sleepers are made, not born."

*NB: Mums struggling with sleep and other issues should discuss their concerns with their Plunket advisor or midwife. Plunket works with Community Karitane and Plunket Kaiawhina workers, who can provide extra family care and support in the form of home visits, when arranged by a Plunket nurse.*

For more information on routine and cue-based feeding, look up this article online at [www.familyhealthdiary.co.nz](http://www.familyhealthdiary.co.nz) **FHD**

■ **by Aileen Nakhle**

## BE IN TO WIN



To be in to win a copy of Jo Tantum's *Baby Secrets* book or Sharlene Poole's *Baby Whispering* DVD, visit [www.familyhealthdiary.co.nz](http://www.familyhealthdiary.co.nz) and click on the 'Sleep like a Baby' link.