

# SLEEP PROBLEMS

HELPING YOUR CHILDREN GET TO AND STAY ASLEEP

Every child is different what suits one child may not work for another. What's important is to build a routine that works for your family and to stick with it.

The number one thing that will improve your child's sleep is consistency.

Lots of children find it difficult to settle down to sleep and some often wake in the night. Children who don't get enough sleep have a harder time controlling their emotions and may become irritable or hyper. Children who don't get enough sleep are more likely to have trouble paying attention and learning in class. It's not always easy but it's important you help your child get the sleep they need so they can be at their best.

## TOP TIPS

- Keep to a regular bed time
- Set a consistent routine
- Help them wind down
- Limit bedtime snacks
- Be strict with your set routine
- Make going to bed a positive experience

## HOW TO ENCOURAGE BETTER SLEEP IN YOUR CHILD

- Decide what time you want your child to go to bed and keep close to that time whenever possible, it helps to keep your child's body clock in a regular pattern. When deciding on a bed time keep in mind that at primary school age, children need 9-11 hours sleep a night. Start a bedtime routine 20 minutes before the time you want your child to fall asleep. If you child is in the habit of going to bed late then bring bed time forward by 5 to 10 minutes each week until you get to the bedtime you want. If you are starting a new sleep routine for your child, make them part of the process by explaining the new plan to them if they are old enough to understand.
- A consistent bedtime routine is very important. It helps your child wind down from the day. A regular bedtime routine starting around the same time each night encourages good sleep patterns. There is no single routine that's right for everyone, but in general, it should include all the things that your child needs to do before going to sleep, including brushing teeth, washing and putting on PJs. Whatever you choose to do, keep the routine short and be firm about ending it when it's time to sleep.

## USEFUL WEBSITES

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<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/health/sleep-problems-in-young-children/>

<https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/conditions-and-treatments/procedures-and-treatments/sleep-hygiene-children/>

<https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/children/>

<https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risks-and-protective-factors/lifestyle-factors/sleep/>

- Your children may enjoy you reading them a bedtime story. Some children like to wind down by reading a book themselves, listening to gentle music or listening to an audiobook. It's a good idea to set a time limit, 30 minutes should be enough to relax their mind. Turn devices off an hour before bedtime as blue light from televisions, computer screens, phones and tablets suppress melatonin levels and delays sleepiness. Make sure the bedroom is dark and quiet and the noise level in the house is low. If your child does not like a totally dark room, turn on a small night light, or leave the hall light on and the door to the bedroom open.
- A full stomach can interfere with sleep but small snack before bedtime can help some children stay fuelled through the night. Good options include a glass of milk or a piece of fruit. Avoid large snacks too close to bed, especially those with lots of sugar or caffeine in.
- Set a limit on how much time you spend with your child when you put them to bed. For example, read only 1 story, then tuck your child in and say goodnight. Children will often ask for that one last thing. If you argue or give in to requests you are giving them the delayed bedtime they want. If your child gets up, keep taking them back to bed again with as little fuss as possible.
- Make their bed a place they like to be. Have their favourite toys or a comforter in their bed. Get them involved with choosing the bed covers they want. Don't use going to bed as a punishment, your children will form negative associations with having to go to bed.