



Helping Your Child Sleep

Sleep is one of the most important factors for wellbeing and effective learning. Many children experience difficulties with sleep for a number of reasons. The impact of a reduced amount of sleep or disturbed sleep is significant on children and young people. Insufficient sleep is associated with adverse physical, behavioural and psychosocial consequences among adolescents (Hildenbrand, Daly, & Nicholls, 2013). The negative impact of sleep problems has been found to affect young people's engagement at school. In addition to sufficient sleep being associated with the ability to concentrate, insufficient sleep is associated with 'school-violence-related behaviours and absenteeism' (Hildenbrand et al., 2013).

WHAT CAN I DO?

Get into a routine

Keep to the same wake up time and bedtime that your child would normally have during the week, weekends, and during holidays. This helps your child's body to produce the right signals to know it's time to sleep. Try to chunk the day to help them see that there is a routine. You could put this on the fridge!

Get exercise and daylight

Getting outside and using energy will help your child to feel tired at night. Doing this in the morning is even better for our bodies. Getting children to say what they can see, smell or hear can help any worries.

Make a 'good sleep' bedroom

Even if a bedroom is used for play and fun during the day, think about how it looks and feels at night. It should be quiet, calm and dark (night lights are fine). Is it possible to hide or remove TVs or game consoles? Can toys be put away? Did you know a bedroom should be 16-18 degrees? Not too warm, not too cold!

Wind down for sleep

Use the hour before bedtime to get ready for sleep. Try moving to a different part of the house (e.g. away from the TV/games), listen to music, do colouring, have a bath, dim the lights. This also means putting phones away! The blue light from screens significantly reduces the sleep hormone in bodies (melatonin).

Relax

Try to keep any talk about worries to earlier in the day – dinner time can be a good chance to talk. There are lots of videos you can use on YouTube to try out relaxing movement such as stretching, breathing, or kid-friendly meditation. Apps such as Calm and Headspace have resources for children. If your child is struggling to stay in bed, try things like hugging their pillow and saying it is full of your love, or having a cuddly toy you both hug before bed as part of a routine.



WHAT ABOUT ADULTS?

A child who does not sleep well can affect the whole family. Parents can be left exhausted, unable to think clearly and struggling to cope with their daily activities. If this continues over a long period of time it can have an adverse effect on the health and wellbeing of all members of the family.

Here are some tips to help support adults to improve their sleep:

- Get out for exercise and fresh air with your family.
- Put the day to rest – make a to-do list, worry list, or just note down thoughts to help you relax.
- Put your phone and other screens away for at least 1 hour before bed. Reading, listening to music or audio books, and puzzles are all good alternatives.
- Relax your body and mind – try some gentle stretching (not intense exercise), breathing or meditations.
- If you can't fall asleep, don't force it. Get up and move around.

Where can I get extra help and information?

[Children - The Sleep Charity](#)

[Routine and Sleep - Lambeth Educational Psychology Service Webinar - YouTube](#)

[Sleep problems in young children - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Helping-your-child-sleep.pdf \(contact.org.uk\)](#)

<https://www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/services/child-development-and-neurodisability/autism-home/autism-support/sleep>

References

Hildenbrand, A. K., Daly, B. P., Nicholls, E., Brooks-Holliday, S., & Kloss, J. D. (2013). Increased risk for school violence-related behaviours among adolescents with insufficient sleep. *Journal of School Health*, 83(6), 408–414. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12044>