

Sleep Tips for Children

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Establish a regular sleep pattern.

A consistent bedtime routine.

Make sure the bedroom is comfortable.

Bed is for sleeping, not entertainment.

Some foods can disturb sleep.

Caffeine is a stimulant.

Take care with daytime naps.

Exercise and time outside.

Work with your doctor.

Establish a regular sleep pattern

Regular hours of sleep are important. It will help your child understand when it is time to sleep. Also, your child will have better sleep. Bedtime shouldn't vary by more than an hour across all days of the week - whether your child has an early start the next morning or not. The same goes for getting up time.

A consistent bedtime routine

It is good to have the same routine before bed each night. This will help prepare for sleep. Quiet activities are good, such as reading a book or being read to or having a bath or shower. In the half hour before bed, there are some things you don't want your child to do. These are more

active games, playing outside, TV, internet or mobile phone social networking and computer games.

Make sure the bedroom is comfortable.

The bedroom should be quiet, comfortable and dark. Some children like a night light. This is fine. Make sure your child sees the bedroom as a good place to be. You can help do this by not using it as a place for punishment.

Bed is for sleeping, not entertainment.

TV, computers, mobile phones and other things that distract your child are not good for their sleep. Keep them out of the bedroom. "Needing" to watch a screen to fall asleep is a bad habit. This

can easily develop, but you don't want it to happen. It's also better if you can check on what your child is watching.

Some foods can disturb sleep

A high intake of sugary or fatty foods has been linked with more restless sleep. Avoid sugary or high fat snacks before bedtime, as well as large meals. A small healthy savoury snack before bed would be fine.

Caffeine is a stimulant

Caffeine is found in many popular drinks. These include coffee, tea, cola soft drinks and some chocolate products. It can make it harder to get to sleep. Your child should have as little of these as possible, and certainly not after lunchtime.

Take care with daytime naps

It is normal for young children to nap during the day. As your child gets older, they will need less sleep. This means they will need to nap less. The number and length of naps depends on your child. If your child naps after 4pm (except for the very young) it can be harder to get to sleep at night.

Exercise and time outside

Daily exercise is an important part of healthy living. It also promotes good sleep. Time spent in bright daylight does the same. Outdoor exercise achieves both these things. However, it is best to steer clear of vigorous activity in the hour before sleep.

Work with your doctor

If your child is sick or isn't comfortable, their sleep will suffer. Some children suffer from specific sleep problems such as frequent nightmares, snoring or sleep apnoea. It is important that these problems are dealt with. If you think ill health is involved, discuss this with your family doctor.

Specific Sleep-related issues in children

The Sleep Health Foundation has a range of helpful fact sheets for children with particular sleep problems. These include tips on sleep issues for children with ADHD (see ADHD and Sleep in Children) or autism (see Autism in Children and Sleep), as well as more general topics such as bedwetting (see Bedwetting), childhood snoring (see Childhood Snoring and Sleep Apnoea) and behavioural problems with settling to sleep (see Behavioural Sleep Problems in School Aged Children).

Other useful links:

- [Sleep Hygiene: Good Sleep Habits](#)
- [Technology and Sleep](#)
- [Caffeine, Food, Alcohol, Smoking and Sleep](#)
- [Caffeine and Sleep](#)
- [Napping](#)
- [ADHD and Sleep in Children](#)
- [Autism in Children and Sleep](#)
- [Bedwetting](#)
- [Childhood Snoring and Sleep Apnoea](#)
- [Behavioural Sleep problems in School Aged Children](#)
- [Sleep Problems and Sleep Disorders in School Aged Children](#)
- [Facts About Sleep for Parents and School Staff](#)
- [How much sleep do you really need?](#)

This information is produced by:

Sleep Health Foundation

ABN 91 138 737 854

www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au

A national organisation devoted to education, advocacy and supporting research into sleep and its disorders.

Sleep Disorders Australia

ABN 91 138 737 854

www.sleepoz.org.au

A voluntary group offering assistance and support to people and their families living with sleep disorders.

Australasian Sleep Association

ABN 91 138 737 854

www.sleep.org.au

The peak national association of clinicians and scientists devoted to investigation of sleep and its disorders.

Disclaimer: Information provided here is general in nature and should not be seen as a substitute for professional medical advice. Ongoing concerns about sleep or other medical conditions should be discussed with your local doctor.