

Sleep Tips for Children



1 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. Bed time should not vary by more than an hour between school and non-school nights. The same goes for the time your child wakes up.

2 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 e.g. 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.

3 Make sure the bedroom is comfortable

The bedroom should be a 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.

4 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" the TV to go to sleep 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.

5 A snack before bed may help

It's harder to sleep on an empty stomach. A light snack can help. Your child should not have a heavy meal within one to two hours of going to bed.

6 Caffeine is a stimulant

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

7 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.

8 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 things. However, it is best to steer clear of heavy exercise in the hour before sleep.

9 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.

This information is produced by:

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www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au

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www.sleepoz.org.au

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

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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.

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Sleep Health Foundation ABN 91 138 737 854
114/30 Campbell Street, Blacktown NSW 2148
T: +61 (0) 2 8814 8655 F: +61 (0) 2 9672 3884