

Helping children to sleep.

You can help children and teenagers to sleep better with bedtime routines, healthy sleep associations, comfortable environments and healthy daytime habits. Try some of these tips below from our parenting expert.

Set up a bedtime routine

A regular bedtime routine starting around the same time each night encourages good sleep patterns. A routine of bath, story and bed can help younger children feel ready for sleep. For older children, the routine might include a quiet chat with you about the day then some time alone relaxing before lights out.

Relax before bedtime

Encourage your child to relax before bedtime. Older children might like to wind down by reading a book, listening to gentle music or some breathing exercises. If your child takes longer than 30 minutes to fall asleep, they might need a longer wind-down period

Keep regular sleep and wake times

Keep your child's bedtimes and wake-up times within 1-2 hours of each other each day. This helps to keep your child's body clock in a regular pattern. It's a good idea for weekends and holidays, as well as school days.

Keep older children's naps early and short

Most children stop napping at 3-5 years of age. If your child over five years is still napping during the day, try to keep the nap to no longer than 20 minutes and no later than early afternoon. Longer and later naps can make it harder for children to get to sleep at night.



Make sure your child feels safe at night

If your child feels scared about going to bed or being in the dark, you can praise and reward your child whenever they're brave. Avoiding scary TV shows, movies and computer games can help too. Some children with bedtime fears feel better when they have a night light.

Check noise and light in your child's bedroom

Check whether your child's bedroom is too light or noisy for sleep. Blue light from televisions, computer screens, phones and tablets suppresses melatonin levels and delays sleepiness. Bright light in the hour before bedtime can have the same effect on young children.

It helps to:

- Turn off devices at least one hour before bedtime
- Keep screens out of your child's room at night
- Dim the lights an hour before bed for children of preschool age and younger.
- If your child uses a night-light, choose a dim, warm-coloured globe, rather than a bright, white, cool-coloured globe.

Avoid the clock

If your child is checking the time often, encourage your child to move the clock or watch to a spot where they can't see it from bed.

Eat the right amount at the right time

Make sure your child has a satisfying evening meal at a reasonable time. Feeling hungry or too full before bed can make your child more alert or uncomfortable. This can make it harder for your child to get to sleep. In the morning, a healthy breakfast helps to kick-start your child's body clock at the right time.

Get plenty of natural light in the day

Encourage your child to get as much natural light as possible during the day, especially in the morning. Bright light suppresses melatonin. This helps your child feel awake and alert during the day and sleepy towards bedtime.

Avoid caffeine

Caffeine is in energy drinks, coffee, tea, chocolate and cola. Encourage your child to avoid these things in the late afternoon and evening, and don't offer them at these times.

