

Good sleep habits: 12 tips

Getting into good sleep habits can help your child have a good night's sleep. And if your child is sleeping well, chances are you might sleep better too. Here are some ideas to get you started.

Establish routines

1. Keep regular sleep and wake times

If your child is six months or older, help him go to bed and get up around the same time every day. Keep wake-up times on school days and weekends to within two hours of each other. This can help get your child's body clock get into a regular rhythm. The body clock is just developing in children younger than six months, but you can still encourage a regular bedtime and wake-up time.



2. Avoid daytime naps for older kids

If your child is five years or older, avoid daytime naps. Daytime naps longer than 20 minutes can make it harder for children over five to get to sleep at night, to get into deep sleep, and to wake up in the morning.

3. Relax before bed

Encourage your child to [relax before bedtime](#). A regular [bedtime routine](#) of bath, story and bed help younger children feel ready for sleep. Older children and grown-ups might like to wind down by reading a book, listening to gentle music or practising [breathing for relaxation](#). This helps the body get ready to catch a 'wave' of sleepiness when it comes.

did you know ?

Some research suggests that if you have a computer on in your bedroom at night, the blue light from its screen might suppress melatonin levels and delay sleepiness.

4. Wind down at night

If your child has a busy morning routine, encourage her to use some wind-down time at night to complete morning tasks, such as getting clothes ready for the next day, making lunch, or getting her school bag ready.

Check your child's sleep environment

5. Make sure your child feels safe at night

If your child does feel scared about going to bed or being in the dark, you can praise and reward him whenever he's brave. Avoiding scary TV shows, movies, computer games or books can help too. Some children with bedtime fears feel better when they have a night light or a personal alarm under their pillows.

6. Check noise and light in your child's bedroom

A dark, quiet, private space is important for good sleep. You can check whether your child's

bedroom is too light or noisy. It'll probably help to turn off electronic stimulation in your child's bedroom at least one hour before bedtime. This includes loud music, mobile phones, computer screens and TV.

7. Avoid the clock

If your child is 'clock watching', encourage her to turn her clock around or move it to where she can't see it.

8. Try relaxing activities before sleep

If your child can't get to sleep straight away, he could try doing something relaxing like listening to gentle music or reading a book under dim light. In the mornings, he should get out of bed when he wakes up, rather than trying to go back to sleep.

Encourage good health and nutrition

9. 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 the body more alert or uncomfortable. This can make it harder to get to sleep.

10. 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. This will help her body produce melatonin at the right times in her sleep cycle. A [healthy breakfast](#) also helps to kick-start the body clock.

11. Avoid caffeine

Encourage your child to avoid caffeine – in energy drinks, coffee, tea, chocolate and cola – or avoid offering them in the late afternoon and evening.

12. Do some exercise

Physical activity and exercise help children aged 2-15 years to sleep longer. It's not a good idea to play sport or be active late at night, though. The stimulation and increase in body temperature can make it harder to go to sleep.

Other ideas

If [worries and anxieties](#) affect your child's sleep, you could work on the problem together during the day. You could talk about it with your child or he could try writing anxious thoughts in a journal.

It's always a good idea to [praise](#) your child when you notice she's trying to make changes to sleep patterns or is trying out a new routine.

Sleep problems

Up to 40% of children and teenagers have [sleep problems](#).

Lack of sleep affects children and adults in different ways, and can have a negative effect on behaviour, emotions, attention, social relationships and school or work performance. For example, your child might be, moody, have trouble concentrating and get sick a lot. When you lack sleep you might have trouble making decisions, get drowsy while driving and have trouble following a conversation.



Seek advice from a health professional if you're concerned that problems with sleep, however mild, are affecting your child's wellbeing, schoolwork or relationships. Also seek help if the problems are making your child anxious, or if they go on for more than 2-4 weeks.



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