

## Healthy sleep tips for children

**Keeping your child to a regular bedtime routine can be difficult, but it can help to improve the quality of their sleep.**

For some children, irregular sleeping hours can be problematic. Setting a regular bedtime schedule can really help children get the right amount of sleep.

[Find out how much sleep kids need.](#)

It's important to devise a routine that works for you and your child, and to stick to it.

"Keep regular sleeping hours," says Jessica Alexander of The Sleep Council.

"A bedtime ritual teaches the brain to become familiar with sleep times and wake times," she says. "It programmes the brain and internal body clock to get used to a set routine."

### Relaxation techniques to aid sleep

Winding down is a critical stage in preparing your child for bed. There are many ways for them to relax:

- A warm (not hot) bath will help their body to reach a temperature where it's most likely to rest.
- Relaxation exercises, such as light yoga stretches, will help to relax their muscles.
- Relaxation CDs work by relaxing the listener with carefully chosen words and gentle hypnotic music and sound effects.
- Reading a book or listening to the radio will relax their mind by distracting it from any worries or anxieties.

Here are some more [relaxation tips](#) your teenager can use to prepare them for sleep.

### Avoid screens in the bedroom

The bedroom should be a relaxed environment.

Experts say that bedrooms are strongly associated with sleep, but that certain things weaken the association. These include tablet computers, mobiles/smartphones, TVs and other electronic gadgets, light or noise, and a bad mattress or uncomfortable bed.

The light from screens can also affect how easily children get to sleep. Try to keep your child's bedroom a screen-free zone and get them to charge their phones and other devices downstairs. That way they won't be tempted to respond to friends getting in touch late in the evening.

Read more about [how keeping your teen's bedroom free of electronic devices can boost their sleep](#).

### Your child's bedroom

"It's important to create an environment that's favourable for sleep," says Alexander. "Keep the bedroom just for sleeping."

The bedroom needs to be dark, quiet and tidy. It should smell fresh and be kept at a temperature of 18-24C. Jessica adds: "Fit some thick curtains. If there's noise outside, consider investing in double glazing or, for a cheaper option, earplugs."

### Getting help with sleep problems

If you have tried these tips, but your child keeps having problems getting to sleep or sleeping through the night, you may feel you could do with more support. You can speak to your GP or health visitor about these worries. They may refer you to a child psychologist or another expert.

### Keep a sleep diary

One of the first things they may ask you to do is to keep a sleep diary for your child as part of diagnosing any sleep problems.

"The sleep diary might reveal some underlying conditions that explain sleep problems, such as stress or medication," says Alexander.

A sleep diary might reveal lifestyle habits or experiences in your child's day-to-day activities that contribute to sleep problems.

It could include answers to the following questions:

- What were your child's sleeping times?
- How long did it take them to get to sleep?
- How many times did they wake up during the night?
- How long did each awakening last?
- How long did they sleep in total?
- Did they do any exercise shortly before going to bed?
- Did they take any naps during the day or evening?
- Has anything made them anxious or upset?

[Download a sleep diary.](#)

Sometimes, sleep problems can be a sign of a mental health problem. Read more about [symptoms of depression in children](#).

Your child's sleep needs change when they become a teenager. [Read about why teenagers are always tired](#).

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