

Sleep Tips: Bedtime routine



A bedtime routine helps to regulate children's body clocks and aids relaxation, leading to a good night's sleep. Trying a new bedtime routine might worsen sleep patterns before they get better. Consistency is important and we advise sticking to the new routine for at least two weeks before you start to see some positive changes.



The goal of a good bedtime routine is for your child to fall asleep on their own, without being rocked, watching TV, or having you lying down next to them. This way, if they do wake up later, they should be able to fall back asleep without needing any extra help.



Top tips:

- Check online to see how much sleep your child should be getting for their age (some children may naturally need a little more/less).
- Start your bedtime routine about an hour before your child goes to sleep.
- Plan the routine and write it down. Create one for your child and theme it with stickers or pictures of your child's favourite things. Display it around your home.
- Try to do things at the same time each day. Sticking to your child's sleep time and wake up time will keep their body clock regular. For teenagers, work with them to negotiate an agreed time and allow them up to an hour later at the weekends if this is important to them.
- Turn off all screens at the start of the routine – blue light inhibits the production of melatonin, the sleep hormone. Dim the lights throughout the house too and darken your child's room by closing the blinds and curtains.
- The first part of a bedtime routine should take place away from your child's bedroom. It could include some free time doing quiet, calming activities such as puzzles, colouring, drawing, craft, reading or a board game. Then your child may need a light supper. See our advice sheet on "Food and drink".
- A bath 30 minutes before bed can help bring on sleepiness due to the decrease in body temperature after a bath and the relaxation of muscles. However, try not to spend too long in the bath as the excitement of playing in the bath will make your child too alert for sleep.
- The bath can then be followed by pyjamas on, teeth cleaned, then into bed and goodnights/story. Remember to keep lights dimmed or off and don't allow your child to go back downstairs to say goodnight to family members.



See our advice sheet "Example of a Bedtime Routine" for a visual routine.

PLEASE NOTE - The information above is a general guide only. Bedtime routines are dependent on many factors. Specialist advice may be necessary to support your child further with their bedtime routine.