

Sleep Guide for Kids



Here are some tips to help kids sleep well

Maintain a regular sleep routine

Try to wake up at the same time EVERY day—even on the weekends and during holidays. This will help your body know when it should sleep and when it should wake up. If you use an alarm clock, put it on the opposite side of the room so that you will have to get out of bed to turn it off. This will prevent you from hitting the “snooze” button again and again.

Develop a bedtime routine

Develop a bedtime routine to let your body know to prepare for bed. Include things that you enjoy, but not too exciting (i.e., no computer, TV, or video games at least 1 hour prior to bed) and that relax you. Listen to relaxing music, read a book, or draw. Relaxation exercises such as stretching, picturing a relaxing place in your mind, and deep breathing may also help relieve anxiety, reduce muscle tension, and allow you to fall asleep easier.

Have a light snack before bed

Having a light snack, like a glass of warm milk, before bed can help you sleep better. Avoid sweet snacks.

Go to bed only when sleepy

If your body is not ready for sleep, you cannot make it sleep. If it is time for bed and you are not sleepy, try reading or doing some light stretching to help you relax.

Take a hot bath or shower 1 ½ - 2 hours before bedtime

There is some evidence that this may help some people. However, do not take baths right before bed – this can interfere with your body’s temperature and make it harder for you to sleep or make you wake up too early.

Limit naps

Napping may feel great, but it can disrupt your body’s sleep - wake cycle and cause you to feel less sleepy at night. It is normal to feel sleepy in the late afternoon, but most people can stop themselves from falling asleep by keeping busy or having a snack or a glass of water.

Don’t take your worries to bed

If you are worried about something or thinking about the day ahead as you try to sleep, you may have trouble falling asleep. What’s worse, you may start to train your brain that it needs to worry in order for you to fall asleep! Try to leave your worries behind when you go to bed. Make a “worry time” during the afternoon or early evening to think about these worries and make your lists then.

Stay away from caffeine at least 4-6 hours before bed

Caffeine tends to make people feel more awake, which can make it harder to fall or stay asleep. Coffee, tea, pop, hot cocoa, chocolate, and some over-the-counter medicines contain caffeine, so try not to have these types of things close to bedtime.

Only use your bed for sleep

The bed should be for sleep. Try not to use your bed for watching TV, eating, doing homework, using the computer, reading, or talking on the phone.



Try not to exercise at least 2 hours before bedtime

Regular exercise not only helps to keep you healthy, but can also help you sleep better. The time you exercise is important though! Exercising late in the evening can make it more difficult to fall asleep. Exercising in the morning or early afternoon is best.

Prepare your bedroom for sleep

Make sure your bed and bedroom are quiet, dark, and comfortable. The temperature of your room is important; a hot room can be uncomfortable and interfere with sleep. A cool (not cold) room with warm bed covers may help with sleep.

Avoid watching the clock

Many people who are having trouble sleeping check the clock to see how long it is taking to fall asleep, how long they have been asleep, or how much longer they have left to sleep. Checking the clock, however, can make you feel more upset and frustrated about not sleeping, which makes it even harder to sleep. You can stop yourself from checking the time by turning your clock around.

Challenge your negative thoughts

Sometimes when people can't sleep, they start to have negative thoughts, such as "I will never fall asleep", "If I don't sleep, I will be a mess tomorrow", "If I don't get enough sleep, I will fail my test". This can make people worry even more about sleeping. Try to replace these thoughts with more positive ones, such as "I always fall asleep eventually" or "I have been tired before and I always do ok".

Use Distraction

If you can't sleep and your mind is racing, try to think about something systematic, like what you will wear in the morning, who you will invite to your birthday party, or the words to your favourite songs. Using this type of distraction stops your brain from racing and forces it to focus on something simple. that won't keep you awake.

Use sunlight to set your body's sleep-wake clock

Our bodies have a kind of "clock" inside that helps us know when to sleep and when to wake up. This is called a biological clock and it uses light to tell time. When your clock senses light, it tries to get you to wake up. When it senses darkness, it starts to make you feel sleepy. When you get up in the morning, make sure you spend some time in bright light - sunlight is best - to tell your clock it is OK to be awake. In the evenings, limit your exposure to light before bedtime so that your clock knows when it should start to make you feel sleepy. Light from the television, smart phones, computer, or even being in a bright room, can confuse your clock and make you feel more awake at bedtime. This may trick your body into thinking it is not tired, even though it really is!



Your Brain Needs Zzzzzs

Not only is sleep necessary for your body, it's also important for your brain. Although scientists aren't exactly sure what work the brain does when you're asleep, some researchers think that the brain sorts through and stores information, and solves problems while you sleep.

When your body doesn't have enough hours to rest, you may feel tired or cranky, or you may be unable to think clearly. You might have a hard time following directions, or you might have an argument with a friend over something silly. A school assignment that's normally easy may feel really hard, or it may take you extra long to finish your homework. You may even feel clumsy playing your favorite sport or instrument.

One more reason to get enough sleep: If you don't, you may not grow as well. That's right, researchers believe too little sleep can affect growth and your immune system, which keeps you from getting sick.

Stages of Sleep

Did you know that there are 5 stages of sleep that your brain goes through when you sleep? In stage 1 your muscles relax. In stage 2 you drift into a light sleep that you can easily be awoken from. When you're in stages 3 and 4, you are sleeping more deeply and it is hard to wake up. In stage 5 (also known as R.E.M sleep, which stands for Rapid Eye Movement), your eyes move back and forth and your breathing is less regular. This is also the stage when people dream. You repeat all these stages up to five times a night!

Visit KidsHealth.org for more facts about sleep.

How Much Sleep Do Kids Need?	1 - 3 Years Old	3 - 6 Years Old	7 - 12 Years Old	12 - 18 Years Old
	12 to 14 Hours a Day	11 to 13 Hours a Day	10 to 11 Hours a Day	8 to 9 Hours a Day

As recommended by the National Sleep Foundation



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