

10 EASY WAYS

YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR CHILD WITH SLEEP

Every living creature needs to **sleep**. It is the primary activity of the brain during early development. ... During the deep states of NREM **sleep**, blood supply to the muscles is increased, energy is restored, tissue growth and repair occur, and **important** hormones are released for growth and development.

SET AN INDIVIDUALIZED

School age children need between **9 and 11 hours of sleep each night**, but there is a lot of variability in sleep needs and patterns. Most kids have patterns that don't change much, no matter what you do. An early riser will still get up early even if you put them to bed later, and a night owl won't usually fall asleep until their body is ready. Know how much sleep your child needs to wake up refreshed and set an appropriate bedtime.

If you know how much sleep your child needs and what time they go to bed, it's simple math to set a daily wake-up time. Allowing your child to sleep a little later on weekends and holidays is generous, but it can set you up for a long, sleepless night. Those extra hours of sleep will affect your child like jetlag, making it hard for their body to feel tired at bedtime. **Keep bedtime and wake-up times the same**, within an hour or so every day.

SET A CONSISTANT WAKE-UP TIME

Routines are especially important for infants, toddlers and preschoolers; however, it is also necessary for all kids (kinder- high school). **Doing specific things before bed**, such as bath/shower time, story/reading time, signal your child what's coming next. Knowing what comes next is comforting and relaxing, setting the perfect bedtime atmosphere. Before long, your child's body may automatically start to become sleepy at the beginning of their routine.

TURN OFF THE TV AT LEAST 2 HOURS BEFORE BEDTIME

Research has shown that the light from a television screen, phone, or computer monitor can interfere with the production of the hormone melatonin. **Melatonin** is an important piece of the sleep-wake cycles. When melatonin levels are at their highest, most people are sleepy and ready for bed. Just *a half an hour* of TV or other screen time before bed can disrupt that enough to keep your child up an **extra 2 hours**. Make the bedroom a screen-free zone or at least makes sure all screens are completely dark from bedtime on. Phones are better left out of the bedroom at night.

CREATE A CONSISTENT BEDTIME ROUTINE

Another hormone that plays a role in sleep is *cortisol*, also known as the "**stress hormone**." When cortisol levels are high, your child's body won't be able to shut down and go to bed. Keep before bedtime activities calm, the lights dim, and the environment quiet.

While a stuffed animal can make it easier for your child to sleep, too many toys can make it harder. Soft sheets, room-darkening shades, and relative quiet can help your child differentiate between day and night, **making it easier to fall asleep**.

REDUCE STRESS BEFORE BEDTIME

Just like adults, kids can have trouble shutting their brains off for the night. Instead of increasing that anxiety by insisting it's time to sleep, consider focusing on the idea of **relaxing and calming** the body down.

CREATE A SLEEP-INDUCING ENVIRONMENT

Your child's sleep cycle isn't just dependent on light (or lack thereof). It's also sensitive to temperature. Melatonin levels help regulate the drop in internal temperature needed to sleep, but you can help regulate the external temperature. Don't bundle your child up too much or set the heat too high; typical room temp. or a little cooler is better to promote sleep.

KEEP IT COOL

If nothing is working and not sleeping, or nightmares continue, they might have a genuine sleep disorder. Seek a doctor's opinion.

PROVIDE PROTECTION FROM FEARS

Instead of dismissing bedtime fears, **address** them. If simple reassurance doesn't work, you can try a special toy to stand guard, or spray the room with "monster spray" before bed.

REDUCE FOCUS ON SLEEP

BE ON THE LOOK OUT FOR SLEEP DISORDERS