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(/child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/) Childrens Sleep

Behaviour & Sleep

Children's Sleep

Getting enough sleep is important for our physical and mental wellbeing. Getting the right amount of sleep will;

- Improve concentration and attention span.
- Give the brain time to 'file' in your memory what it has learnt in the day.
- Let the body rest and repair - this helps to keep the immune system ready to protect from illnesses.
- Reduce stress hormones and is good for emotional and mental health.

Making sure children and young people get enough sleep helps them keep well, thrive and reach their potential.

Sleep Difficulties

Sometimes sleep is more difficult. There are many things that get in the way of a good night sleep for children. It could be;

- Life changes and / or worries about things happening in their lives
- Bad dreams and night time fears
- Not having a regular bedtime and getting up time
- Being 'over-stimulated' before bedtime by some foods or drinks, screen time or social media
- The room being too hot, too cold, too light / too dark.



There are things you can do to help your child get enough rest, this is called sleep hygiene.

Please see the downloads section below for more information about sleep hygiene.

Dive Deeper

Bedtime Worries

Ask your child if anything is worrying them. Give your child time to talk through how they are feeling.

There could be a change they are facing like a new school or a house move. There might have been arguments or a crisis in the family that is upsetting them. They might have friendship worries.

[Read more about worry and anxiety \(/emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/worries-anxiety/\)](#)

Night Time Fears

Some children go through times when they have bad dreams – this might tie in with worries they have or they may be part of their busy imaginations.

Many children also go through periods where they feel frightened of the dark, ghosts or monsters but this often passes with reassurance and time.

If your child is having night time fears, try;

- A night light or door left slightly open
- Checking the room for any 'monsters'
- Making a [dream catcher](https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-t-1138-how-to-make-a-dreamcatcher-activity-cards) (<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-t-1138-how-to-make-a-dreamcatcher-activity-cards>) together lets your child know you take their fears seriously
- Make sure your child is not seeing or hearing things on TV, social media or from friends and family that are too scary for them to cope with.



If your child wakes in the night after a bad dream;

- Go to them and reassure them they are safe.
- Don't ask them about their dream as this might make it feel more 'real'.
- Keep the lights low and talk to them quietly – once they have calmed down settle them back in bed.
- Tell them you are close by and will come back if they need you.

Bedtime Routines

Just like babies, as children get older they still benefit from routines to their day. This helps them know what happens and when. Your child will start to recognise the 'wind down' time of the day and their body will prepare for sleep.

- Have the same bed and getting up times each day. It can be tempting to catch up on 'lost' sleep with lie ins, or let your child stay up late at weekends but this can make it harder to establish a pattern that helps your child get enough sleep.
- Let your child know it will soon be time to start getting ready to settle down.
- Have a build up to bedtime – a bath, a drink, a light snack. Start to slow down the types of games and activities – reading with you or on their own, or listening to relaxing music.
- Avoid screens from phones or tablets for the hour or so before bedtime. They give off a blue light that gets in the way of the sleep hormone – melatonin.

If your child has not been used to a routine you may have to start slowly. Notice what time they seem to naturally get tired and start your new 'wind down' routine about an hour before this.

Once you and your child are used to this, you can gradually shift bedtime to one that suits your family lifestyle and makes sure your child gets enough sleep.

Food & Drink Near Bedtime

Eating and drinking too much or not enough before bed can affect sleep.

- Avoid drinks that have caffeine in like tea and coffee and some fizzy drinks.
- Sugary foods and drinks can make it more difficult to settle ready for bed.
- Try a light supper of wholemeal toast or sugar free cereals, yoghurt or fruit (make sure they clean their teeth before they settle to sleep).

Let your child have a drink of water nearby in case they need it in the night.

The Bedroom

Having a restful bedroom can help your child settle to sleep. Whilst it can be trickier if children share a room, making it a place they like to be without distractions like screens or noisy toys will help.

- Make sure the room is a comfortable temperature. Around 16-20 degrees.
- Some children like a dark room where others find a night light or a slightly open door comforting - do what works best for your child.
- Don't use the bedroom for time outs or punishments - it helps if your child thinks of their room as a nice place to be.

Teenagers

As your child reaches their teens you will notice a change in their sleep patterns. Puberty and a huge period of [brain development \(/child-development-additional-needs/supporting-development/teenage-brain/\)](#) are happening.

The sleep hormone (called melatonin) gets released later at night in teenagers (about 10pm for adults and about 1am for teenagers). This means teenagers often go to sleep later and want to get up later too. It is a biological change and they cannot help it. Unfortunately it does not always fit in with school and family life.

It can be the cause of a lot of arguments as parents try to get teenagers to get up on time or settle down at a reasonable bedtime.

Teenage Sleep Facts

- Teenagers need around 9 hours sleep a day. It is good for physical and emotional wellbeing
- During sleep a teenager's physical growth happens, controlled by the release of growth hormone during the night
- Being rested also helps mood and concentration
- Helping your child get rest can help them cope better with the ups and downs of teenage life.

Rules and Boundaries

It can take a lot of compromise and talking to come up with boundaries about bedtime that your teen can stick to. Encourage your child to;

- Go to bed at the same time each night
- Keep the room cool
- Dim the lights
- Turn off phones, computers and TV screens for an hour before settling down time. The blue light from screen time stops the sleep hormone from being released. You may have to make a 'no phones in bedrooms' rule after a certain time.

It is not easy to have bedtime disagreements with a teenager. Be consistent and calm. Good sleeping habits will help them keep physically and emotionally well.

Children & Young People With Additional Needs

If your child has additional needs it can be even harder to get them into good sleep patterns. This can be very tiring and stressful for the whole family.

Find out more information and advice (</child-development-additional-needs/additional-needs/sleep/>)

Downloads

<p>Sleep Diary Template</p> <p>Download (https://www.nhs.uk)</p>	<p>Sleep East Information</p> <p>Download (https://www.norfolk.nhs.uk)</p>
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Also in this section...

Baby's Sleep → (</child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/baby-s-sleep/>)

Children's Sleep → (</child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/childrens-sleep/>)

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<p>3b3lxzvj/sleep-hygiene.pdf</p>	<p>devastating-effects-upon-children-and-families.pdf</p>
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[approach \(/online-learning/\)](/online-learning/)

[Still Worried / Need More Help? \(/our-services/still-worried/\)](/our-services/still-worried/)

Who can Help?

Need More Information

NHS - Healthy Sleep
Tips For Children

→ (<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/healthy-sleep-tips-for-children/>)

Mental Health Foundation - Ten
Top Tips For Sleep

→ (<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/ten-top-tips-good-sleep>)

Sleep
Problems in
Childhood &
Adolescence

→ (<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/parents-and-young-people/information-for-parents-and-carers/sleep-problems-in-childhood-and-adolescence-for-parents-and-carers>)

Anna Freud -
Sleep

→ (<https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/sleep/>)

Sleep
East

→ (<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/children-and-families/send/care-and-support/sleep-east-cic-sleep-deprivation-has-devastating-effects-upon-children-and-families.pdf>)

Other Useful Pages



Supporting Children's
Mental Health

([/emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/supporting-children-s-mental-health/](#))



Worries & Anxiety

([/emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/worries-anxiety/](#))



Getting Into A Routine

(/child-development-additional-needs/supporting-development/getting-into-a-routine/)

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