

What If My Child Wakes During The Night?

- If your child gets up in the night, calmly return them to their bed. Avoid talking to them if possible.
- If your child has woken up because they have had a bad dream, quietly reassure them with a cuddle, stroke their hand or apply gentle pressure on their arm.
- Some children will take longer to settle after a bad dream. You can help by re-assuring them that the dream is not real and that dreams are just a movie of which they are the Director. They can change the movie by imagining something different e.g. the bad guy gets stuck in toffee or the monster turns to pink marshmallow.



Bedtime Rituals For Anxious Children

Read My Fingertips

Trace words, pictures or messages on your child's back with your fingertips. Try to think of things to induce sweet dreams. This can be very soothing and relaxing.



Sweet Dreams

Before your child goes to sleep try exchanging stories that begin, "The wonderful dream I'm going to have tonight is...."

Start A Saga

Invent your own epic story. Start with an interesting story opener 'Once upon a time, there was a tiny mouse who strayed away from home....' Take turns adding a sentence to the tale and continue on for a few nights. Keep the stories light hearted, no violence etc.



Piece It Together

Set up a 500 or 1000 piece jigsaw puzzle somewhere that won't be disturbed. Every night work on it with your child for 15 minutes as part of your bedtime routine. It is a calm activity and you can chat while you work.

Establishing A Bedtime Routine



Tips to help take the
battle out of bedtimes.

Why Does Sleep Matter?

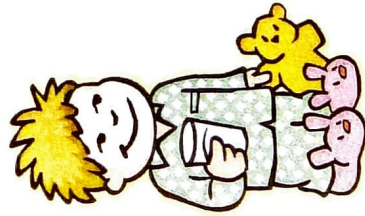
Sleep plays a significant role in brain development, and it is therefore important for children to get enough sleep as their bodies grow and mature.

As well as the role it plays in brain development, sleep also plays an important role in our brain's day-to-day ability to function. Lack of sleep makes it much harder for us to concentrate, and we become forgetful, irritable and prone to being clumsy and making mistakes. Scientific evidence shows that the right amount of night-time sleep is just as important for children's development as healthy eating and regular exercise.

How Much Sleep Is Enough?

Sleep requirements differ from individual to individual but in general children between the ages of 7 and 11 need around 10 - 12 hours of sleep a night. As children get older social, school, and family activities increase making bedtimes gradually later and later.

Bedtime is a chance to spend some quality time together, and if it's a time both you and your child enjoy, your son or daughter will settle down in bed and drop off to sleep more easily.



Tips For Setting Up A Routine

- Keep your child's bedtime consistent. This will train your child's brain to recognise that it is tired.
- Try not to change your routine - if you want your child to have a slightly later bedtime at the weekend, then only change it by maybe an hour.
- Start the bedtime routine 30 minutes to an hour before you want your child to sleep.
- No rigorous, lively or stimulating activity before bed. Keep activities calm and relaxing such as; jigsaw puzzles or drawing.
- Help your child to relax by avoiding watching T.V. or using electronic devices immediately before bedtime as these stimulate the brain.
- Avoid checking the time or rushing your child.
- Give your child gentle reminders of what's coming next, possibly whilst they are in the bath or getting dressed. "In 5 minutes you can get out of the bath and get your pyjamas ready for your drink."
- Soothing music or monotonous sound can help to settle a child to sleep.
- Try to end the day on a positive note by telling your child something they did that pleased you.

The 4 Bs—Bath, Brush teeth, Book, Bed

1. Start with a warm, not hot bath.
2. Make sure the child's pyjamas/nightwear is comfortable e.g. not too tight, too warm or itchy.
3. A warm milky drink. Milk and Horlicks, are good alternatives to cocoa/hot chocolate as they do not contain caffeine. Milk contains Tryptophan which promotes sleep, (some children may prefer to read at this stage).
4. Brush teeth and check that your child has used the toilet before going to bed.
5. Your child's bed should be free of clutter.
6. Keep the lights dim in the bedroom to help the child prepare for the dark and to reinforce that night time is for sleeping.
7. Read a book for an agreed number of pages to the child, take turns or let them read to you.
8. Older children may prefer to read to themselves or chat about their day.
9. If your child expresses a fear of the dark, a night light can help reduce the anxiety.
10. Say good night in whichever way is comfortable for you both, a kiss, cuddle, a stroke on the face and leave the room.