

Patient information

Sleep - a guide for school aged children

Why getting a good night's sleep is so important?

Getting sufficient sleep has been shown to benefit memory, learning, attention, mood, behaviour and physical health.

How many hours does your child need?

Age	Hours of sleep
Pre-school (3 - 5 years)	11 - 13
5 - 9	10 - 11 hours
10 - 14	9 - 9.75
15 – 17	8.5 - 8.75
Adults	7 – 9

(Information from National Sleep Foundation and NHS Choices)

Promoting sleep

Exercise and activity

Exercise during the day is important to help us sleep but discourage lots of activity right before bedtime.

Exercise affects our body temperature and the best time to exercise to promote sleep is 4 - 6 hours before sleep.

Diet

A healthy balanced diet promotes good sleep. A large meal too close to bedtime will interfere with sleep.

If your child has a snack before bed, carbohydrates such as bread or cereal are good options.

Monitor your child's sleep to consider how different foods may be affecting their sleep.

Environment

Create a good sleeping environment for your child. Their bedroom should be calm dark, quiet and cool. A night-light may help children feel safer.

Do not allow your child to watch TV or play computer games whilst falling asleep. These activities stimulate children and therefore do not promote sleep.

Reward



Give your child lots of praise for accomplishing even small things as they develop better sleep habits.

Bedtime routine

Establishing a bedtime routine is crucial in supporting your child to sleep well. Here are some hints on creating a good bedtime routine.

Decide on a bed time and stick to it. Weekends and holidays may have more flexibility.

Don't extend the routine or make exceptions. Make sure that this routine is the same every night and praise your child for completing the tasks.

It may be helpful to have the routine written down or in picture format to help guide your child.

A bath 30 minutes before bed can help to promote sleep.

Avoid activities that make your child excited (playing active games, watching TV, computer games etc.)

Begin bedtime routine at least half an hour before bed time. Some children take longer to wind down than others so give plenty time. Bedtime routine may take longer for children who have ADHD.

- ✓ Give a “heads up” that the routine is about to begin 30minutes before the start of the routine.
- ✓ Give countdown reminders as required. This will make it easier for your child to begin the routine rather than if they are abruptly interrupted in the middle of an activity.
- ✓ Build a bedtime routine of 4 to 5 activities. Activities should be things that prepare your child for bed e.g. brush teeth, put pyjamas on.
- ✓ As a reward for completing the routine, whatever time is left before the set bedtime is time for the two of you to have 1:1 time. This may be reading a story together or talking.
- ✓ Tell your child it's time for sleep and say goodnight.
- ✓ It can be helpful to have the same phrase used every night to act as a cue for the expected behaviour.

But what if

My child frequently awakens during the night?

Night time waking is normal as a temporary stage. If this problem persists talk to your doctor.

- Don't go into the child's room unless you must, for example if they are really upset.
- Assume that the child has to go to the bathroom and steer them that way. Be gentle and quiet. Try not to put any lights on as they wake us up.
- Do not talk to them as engaging or show emotion as engaging them in conversation will waken them more.
- If your child wakes from a nightmare then provide reassurance to help settle them back to sleep but do not engage in conversation.

My child keeps getting out of bed?

Children will create reasons for having to get out of bed. Usually this is because they are either scared, bored or both.

If a child gets out of bed, the longer they stay up and the further away they get from their bedroom, the more reinforcement they will get from this behaviour therefore it is important to stop them as soon as possible and do not talk or show any emotion.

- Ensure that bedtime routine covers reasons for getting up like being hungry or thirsty.
- If your child has difficulty falling asleep without you, sit in a chair in the room and gradually move further away until you are outside of the room.
- Consider the use of reward charts for staying in bed but remember that there is a long delay in this reward as it would be used the next morning and therefore is likely to be more effective with older children.

Find out more

NHS Children's Sleep website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Childrenssleep/Pages/childrenssleephome.aspx>

National Sleep Foundation: <https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-topics/children-and-sleep>

The Sleep Charity <https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/children/>

1-2-3 Magic, Effective Discipline for children 2 - 12 by Thomas Phelan

The information in this leaflet has been taken from the above resources. Please refer to them for further information.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo)

<https://www.accessable.co.uk>

