



Tips for Parents on Helping Children Get a Good Night's Sleep

Regardless of your age, a good night's rest is important for your health. Unfortunately, for many parents getting their children to get an adequate amount of sleep can be difficult. Children need a healthy amount of sleep in order to develop and function properly. Sleep affects mood, the immune system, as well as a child's energy level and the ability to stay alert and learn new skills. A restless child not only jeopardizes their own health, but disrupts the slumber of sleepy-eyed parents who must attend to a child who refuses to go to bed. Here are some sleep solutions for parents to help their children, and the whole household, get a good night's rest.

- **Follow a bedtime routine.** Children thrive on routine. By initiating a regular nightly schedule children will learn signals that indicate bedtime. This will also set and align expectations for parents and children. Brushing teeth, reading, taking a bath or putting on pajamas are all ways to initiate bedtime. Make sure to follow through every night at roughly the same time. There is no ideal bedtime for every child as sleep needs, lifestyles and nap patterns can vary.
- **Set the scene.** Creating a quiet and cool atmosphere in your child's bedroom without distractions such as a television, a computer or a bright night light helps a child sleep comfortably through the night.
- **Transitional objects offer security.** In addition to establishing a routine, children must learn to comfort themselves and fall asleep unassisted. Separation anxiety during bedtime can be made easier by offering a transitional object such as a doll, teddy bear or blanket. Children will feel a sense of security that will comfort them and ease them to sleep.
- **Track caffeine intake.** Excessive caffeine intake can decrease the amount of quality sleep your child gets every night. Watch for hidden sources of caffeine in your child's diet such as chocolate, tea, soda and coffee-flavored desserts.
- **Learn to recognize sleep problems.** The most common sleep-related problems in children include multiple nighttime awakenings, trouble breathing, snoring and loud or heavy breathing while sleeping. These can lead to problems during the day such as trouble staying alert, or being more tearful, anxious, touchy or impatient than usual. Consult a physician to address sleep disorders.
- **Exercise.** Physical activity during the day will naturally tire your child, helping them to fall asleep and sleep through the night.
- **Don't use sleep as punishment.** Rewarding a child with a later bedtime for good behavior will endorse negative associations with sleeping and bedtime, making it increasingly difficult to get your child to sleep. Decide on a regular bedtime that will allow your child to wake up refreshed in the morning.
- **Consistency.** As every aspect of parenting requires consistency and follow-through, sticking to a nightly regimen will promote stability in your child's sleeping patterns and behavior.