



## Tips for Parents - Sleep

Sleep is critical for children's brain development, and primary school-aged children need ten to eleven hours of sleep each night. When your child hasn't had enough sleep, they will struggle to regulate their emotions and behaviour, and won't be able to focus at school.

There are many causes of sleep disorders, including emotional, physical and developmental differences. Below are a few helpful tips from experts and parents for supporting children who are having difficulties sleeping.

### Tip 1 – Keep a regular sleep schedule

Try to help your child go to bed and wake up at about the same time each day. This encourages their body to expect sleep at a particular time, creating a natural rhythm of waking and sleeping.

### Tip 2 - Create a consistent bedtime routine

Our brains take a while to wind down in the evening, and a consistent bedtime routine can really help. This shouldn't be more than thirty to sixty minutes long and doing things in a predictable order can help your child to feel more secure.

### Tip 3 - Create a soothing sleep environment

Make sure your child's bedroom is comfortable, dark, cool, and quiet. If they are anxious in the dark, you could also use a nightlight. Try to keep technology outside of the bedroom and avoid screens in bed.

## Tip 4 – Reduce stress

Stress can make it harder for our brains to switch off, and some children find it helpful to write down their worries before bed. You can help reduce their anxiety through distraction and storytelling, or focusing on what they can see, hear and touch. A night light or cuddly toy can also help them to feel safe.

## Tip 5 – Encourage exercise and daylight

It's important for children to be active during the day. Sunlight helps regulate our circadian rhythm, the 24-hour internal clock in our brain that regulates when we are awake and asleep. Getting outside in the morning and just before sunset can be particularly helpful.

## Tip 6 – Make a plan

Some children wake up in the night and want their parents to soothe them back to sleep. You can help your child learn self-soothing strategies as they get older, such as switching on their nightlight or cuddling a favourite toy.

## Tip 7 – Listen to what they need

Every child is different. Some children might find gentle noise helps them to relax and fall to sleep, but for others this might be unsettling. Help your child learn what works for them and adapt their bedtime routine as needed.

## Tip 8 – Consider their diet

After lunchtime, try and avoid your child having energy drinks, fizzy drinks and chocolate which contain caffeine. Having an earlier evening meal is also helpful.

## Tip 9 – Ask for help

If your child has long-term difficulties with sleep and they are getting tired during the day, seek professional advice. If they experience snoring, coughing at night, sleepwalking or bed wetting, the GP can also make sure there's nothing else going on.