

Healthy Sleep Habits for Kids

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Good sleep is essential for your child's growth, learning, and overall well-being. Below are some tips to help establish healthy sleep habits for children of all ages.

1. Set a Consistent Bedtime Routine

Why: A routine helps signal to your child that it's time to wind down and prepare for sleep.

What to do:

- Start the routine at the same time every evening (even on weekends).
- Include calming activities like a warm bath, reading a story, or gentle music.
- Keep the bedtime routine short and soothing, lasting about 20-30 minutes.

2. Create a Comfortable Sleep Environment

Why: A quiet, dark, and cool room encourages better sleep.

What to do:

- Ensure the room is dark, using blackout curtains or a nightlight if needed.
- Maintain a cool room temperature (18-21°C).
- Minimize noise and distractions. Use a white noise machine if necessary.

3. Set a Regular Sleep Schedule

Why: Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day helps regulate your child's body clock.

What to do:

- Set a consistent bedtime and wake-up time, even on weekends.
- Adjust bedtime gradually (about 15 minutes earlier) if needed to help your child get the recommended amount of sleep for their age.

4. Limit Screen Time Before Bed

Why: The blue light from screens can interfere with the production of melatonin, the hormone that helps regulate sleep. Additionally, the content from the screen is often stimulating and will prevent the brain from "slowing down"

What to do:

- Turn all screens (phone, tablet, TV, computer) at least 60 minutes before bedtime.
- Consider using a "no screens" rule in the bedroom - this can be applied to everyone in the home.

5. Encourage Physical Activity During the Day

Why: Regular exercise can help children fall asleep faster and enjoy deeper sleep.

What to do:

- Include physical activity in your child's daily routine (e.g., outdoor play, sports, dancing).
- Avoid vigorous exercise close to bedtime, as it can have the opposite effect and make it harder to fall asleep.



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6. Be Mindful of Food and Drink

Why: Certain foods and drinks can affect sleep quality.

What to do:

- Avoid large meals, sugary snacks, and caffeinated drinks (like soda or chocolate) before bed.
- Offer a light, healthy snack if your child is hungry before bedtime (e.g., a small piece of fruit or yogurt).

7. Help Your Child Relax

Why: A calm mind and body help promote restful sleep.

What to do:

- Teach your child relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing or visualization.
- Consider using soft music or a white noise machine to promote a peaceful environment.

Age-Specific Sleep Recommendations:

Infants (4-12 months):

12-16 hours per day, including naps.

Toddlers (1-2 years):

11-14 hours per day, including naps.

Preschoolers (3-5 years):

10-13 hours per day, including naps.

School-age children (6-12 years):

9-12 hours per day.

Teens (13-18 years):

8-10 hours per day.

Why Sleep is Important for Kids:

Physical Health:

Sleep is crucial for growth, immune function, and repairing muscles and tissues.

Mental Health:

Quality sleep improves mood, behavior, and emotional regulation.

Cognitive Development:

Sleep boosts memory, focus, and learning abilities.

Here are some trusted sources if you are interested in reading more about sleep in children:

1. American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

The AAP provides guidelines on sleep and sleep disorders in children, including the importance of a consistent bedtime routine, a safe sleep environment, and sleep recommendations by age group.

2. National Sleep Foundation (NSF)

The NSF provides detailed information on the importance of sleep, including how sleep affects health, development, and well-being in children, as well as age-specific sleep needs.

3. The Sleep Foundation

This foundation offers evidence-based guidance on good sleep hygiene, including suggestions for creating a sleep-friendly environment and the importance of bedtime routines for children.

4. 24-hour Movement Guidelines

Canadian Guidelines designed to help families with age appropriate targets for activity, sleep and sedentary behaviours.