

Suggestions on how to improve children's sleep

1. Consistent bedtime and waking time (e.g. 8pm and 7am)
2. Consistent evening and bed time routine, which might include
 - a. A warm bath
 - b. A warm milk drink
 - c. Bedtime story
 - d. Relaxation techniques – e.g. deep slow breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, positive / pleasant imagery
 - e. A tape or CD of soft instrumental music (or lullabies for younger children)
3. Aim to put child in bed when tired by getting them to be active in the day (e.g. long walks, trampoline etc)
4. Turn off ALL computer games, TV, mobile phones, and computers 1-2 hours before bedtime and stop the child using them in bed (the light from these equipment stop melatonin, which is a natural sleep chemical from being released). Also interaction with the equipment keeps your child's brain active which makes it harder for them to fall asleep
5. Avoid coffee, tea, or caffeinated soft drinks (e.g. standard coca cola, energy drinks etc) from lunchtime. Many ready-made drinks have caffeine – so check the content before you offer it to your child. Remember that people drink coffee to keep us awake!
6. Ensure bedroom is comfortable and conducive for sleep (e.g. quiet, dark, no extremes of temperature)
7. Reward every successful day (e.g. following the agreed routine, continued stay in bed through the night). You can start with tokens (e.g. star charts) and add tangible rewards in exchange for a number of tokens.
8. If child wakes up, encourage to return to bed. Reward successful episodes of returning to bed.
9. Consistent and firm approach is required before children get used to the new set of routines. It may be quite difficult at the beginning but should get better once the parent's firmness becomes clear to the child.
10. Bear in mind the following average sleep requirements for children of different ages. These are averages, hence some typical children might require a little more or less than the figures shown.
 - a. 2 years 13 hours
 - b. 5 years 11 hours
 - c. 9 years 10 hours
 - d. 14 years 9 hours
 - e. 17 years 8 hours