

Sleeping Strategies for Children

How Much Sleep Does My Child Need? Toddlers (1–2-year-olds) should get 11-14 hours of sleep per night, and pre-school aged children (3-5 year old's) should be getting 10-13 hours of sleep per night.

Activities:

- Mindfulness activities (e.g., Go Noodle website)
- Ensure your child is getting enough exercise throughout the day
- Try some heavy work activities throughout the day
- Try a massage prior to bedtime or gentle rocking
- Eliminate rough and tumble play before bed as this may over-stimulate your child. Try a quiet activity instead (e.g., colouring, building with Lego)
- Try limiting screen time, particularly before bedtime (cease 2 hours before bedtime) as this can alert us rather than calm us.

Consider the Environment

- An organized room without clutter can help with less distraction for promoting sleep.
- Remember to go to the washroom before bed.
- Have water nearby
- Wash sheets and clothing in scent free laundry detergent so the strong smell of detergent does not interfere with sleep.
- Be aware of sounds in the house or outside that may wake your child. Using music, a fan, or white noise can help block noises that wake your child.
- Consider the environment of the bedroom- cool, quiet, and dark may be helpful.
- Ensure your child is comfortable in their bed and their bed fits them well
- Remove LED lights if possible
- Consider a chime on parent's door if your child tends to come to your room in the night
- Consider safety precautions for a child who wanders in the night
- Consider sounds and your voice prior to bedtime- slow and quiet voice is more calming than a loud fast voice.

Consistency and Routines:

- Create a consistent routine for sleep with preparing for sleeping at the same time daily.
- Consider a social story about sleeping expectations
- Consider a visual schedule with the sleep routine
- Make sure there is a predictable routine prior to bed. Try doing things in this order:
 - Quiet play
 - Bath time (for some children, bath time is a very exciting time - if this is the case, consider moving bath time earlier in the evening)
 - Bedtime story

○ Bedtime

- Cease eating and drinking before bedtime and offer fruit, milk or light snacks before bed if needed.
- If your child gets up or wakes up, bring them back to bed and encourage sleep through placing them in bed, covering them and cuing for sleep.
- If your child is not sleeping well and is between two and three, gradually reduce nap time until your child is more tired at night and sleeps better.

References:

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