

Bedtime



Experts acknowledge that sleep plays a significant role in brain development, and it is therefore important for children to get enough sleep as their bodies grow and mature. Plus it's vital for your relationship that you and your partner have time to yourselves, too.

Routine

Establishing a regular evening routine leading up to a consistent bedtime helps your child learn the importance of going to bed and keeps difficult or avoidant behaviour to a minimum.

- **Involve your child in regular exercise earlier in the day** as this may also help them sleep. The [Change4Life](#) campaign provides some great ideas on how you can help your child to be more active.
- **Encourage quieter activities** at the end of the day such as reading, colouring or drawing.
- **Play calming background music** and keep your voice calm and low.
- **Give your child a warm bath** before bed can help them relax and maintain calm.
- **Avoid activities which will cause excitement** leading up to bedtime e.g. spinning, running around, jumping, climbing and high activity television or computer games.
- **Sit with your child and read books** before bedtime and consider allowing the use of bedtime story tapes or calming music.
- **Try to avoid checking your watch** or hurrying things along.
- **Avoid foods that contain caffeine or large amounts of refined sugar**, as these make sleeping more difficult.

Environment

Consider your child's bedroom, which may be very busy and stimulating:

- **Organise the toys and games** so that they can be put away or put out of sight at night.
- **Minimise busy wall displays** or decorations
- **Use dark curtains or blackout blinds** to reduce the light stimulation.
- **A night-light may help** if your child dislikes the dark.
- **Use heavy duvets/blankets** or a sleeping bag during colder months to provide consistent deeper pressure around the body.
- **Change to a sleeping bag** made from a sheet or lightweight fabric in the summer to avoid losing bedclothes during the night.