

Check-Out Your Child's Sleep (And Your Own)

Sleep Guidelines:

<i>Age of Child</i>	<i>Recommended number of hours sleep</i>	<i>Suggested bedtime if waking at 7:00am</i>
3 – 5 years	10 to 13 hours	7:30 (11 hrs.)
6 – 13 years	9 to 11 hours	8:00 - 9:00 (10 - 11 hrs.)
14 -17 years	8 to 10 hours	10:00 (9 hrs.)
18 – 25 years	7 to 9 hours	11:00 (8 hrs.)
26 – 64 years	7 to 9 hours	11:00 (8hrs.)

<https://sleepfoundation.org/media-center/press-release/national-sleep-foundation-recommends-new-sleep-times>

How Insufficient Sleep May Be Affecting Your Child:

- Overly emotional (explosive temper, easily hurt feelings, no patience)
- Difficulty concentrating and focusing attention (this makes learning difficult)
- Hyperactivity
- Defiant or contrary behavior
- Difficulty falling asleep (overtired)
- Increased appetite
- Accident prone or clumsy
- Excessive talking

<http://sleep lady.com/toddler-sleep-problems/11-negative-effects-of-childhood-sleep-deprivation/>

Six Sleep Tips:

1. Stick to a sleep schedule. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends, holidays and days off. Being consistent reinforces your body's sleep-wake cycle and helps promote better sleep at night.
2. Pay attention to what you eat and drink. Don't go to bed either hungry or stuffed. Your discomfort might keep you up. Also limit how much you drink before bed, to prevent middle-of-the-night trips to the toilet. Avoid caffeine.
3. Create a comfortable bedtime routine. Do the same things each night to tell your body it's time to wind down. This might include taking a warm bath or shower, reading a book, or listening to soothing music — preferably with the lights dimmed. Relaxing activities can promote better sleep by easing the transition between wakefulness and drowsiness.
4. Turn off the TV and other screens at least a half hour before bed. The light and mental stimulation from screens “tricks” the brain into perceiving daylight and can lengthen the time to fall asleep.
5. Get comfortable. This means a cool, dark and quiet room. Consider using room-darkening shades, earplugs, a fan or other devices to create an environment that suits your needs.
6. If you want to increase your child's sleep hours, do it gradually over a couple weeks.

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/sleep/art-20048379>

Helping Your Child Sleep Alone

Click here: http://www.anxietybc.com/sites/default/files/dealing_with_co_sleeping.pdf

Does Your Child Fear The Dark?

Many children are afraid of the dark. If not addressed, a child's fear of the dark may linger and continue to disrupt their bedtime routine and sleeping habits. There are many ways that parents can help their child to overcome a fear of the dark.

As with other fears, it is important to handle a child's fear of the dark with sympathy and understanding. Do not ridicule or dismiss your child's feelings, or be angry. The first step in helping your child to overcome their irrational fear is to accept their feelings as real and respond to them with sensitivity.

- Ask them to tell you about their fears and what exactly makes them afraid.
- Show your child that you understand their fears, but that you don't necessarily share them.
- Reassure them that they are safe; explain there are no such things as monsters.
- Don't try to reassure your child by checking in the cupboard or under the bed as this may suggest to the child that you believe monsters could be there.
- If your child is afraid of the dark because of the possibility of intruders, it may help to show them the security measures around the house, such as locks. However, never lock a door while people are inside the house, as it may block escape in a fire or other emergency.
- Ask your child for suggestions on what would make them feel more secure. Offer suggestions yourself. Perhaps they would feel better if they took a special toy or comfort object to bed.
- Find out if their fear of the dark comes from other worries. For example, some children may be afraid of their parents separating or dying, and this anxiety gets worse when they are alone in the dark. Talk to your child honestly about such issues.

Practical ways to deal with your child's fear of the dark include:

- Establish a relaxing routine with a predictable bedtime.
- Put a nightlight in your child's room, or allow some light from the hallway.
- A child's fear tends to lessen if they feel they have some control over a situation. For example put a lamp by their bedside so they can switch on the light themselves. Use a low-wattage bulb.
- Make sure their television viewing habits and reading materials are appropriate to their age. News footage, movies or scary books can easily frighten a child.
- Look around their room at night and try to see things from their perspective. Is there a picture or toy that may cast a shadow or look creepy in the half-light?
- Regular exercise helps to reduce stress levels. Make sure your child has plenty of physical activity during the day.
- Don't make fun of or belittle their fear.
- Reinforce positive behaviour. Allow your child to make small steps towards overcoming their fear and compliment them on each achievement. Whenever they accomplish a step, such as not jumping out of bed the minute you tuck them in, reward them. Toddlers respond well to simple reward systems, such as stickers or stamps on a wall chart.

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/fear-and-anxiety-children>

*When all attempts are unsuccessful, contact your physician.