

Sleep Tips for Children

The following recommendations will help your child get the best sleep possible and make it easier for him to fall asleep and stay asleep.

- **Sleep schedule:** Your child's bedtime and waketime should be about the same time everyday. There should not be more than 1 hour's difference in bedtime and waketime between school nights and non-school nights. Make your child's bedtime early so that he can get enough sleep.
- **Bedtime routine:** Your child should have a 20-minute to 30-minute bedtime routine that is the same every night. The routine should include calm activities, such as reading a book or talking about the day, with the last part occurring in the room where your child sleeps.
- **Bedroom:** Your child's bedroom should be comfortable, quiet, and dark. A nightlight is fine, as a completely dark room can be scary for some children. Your child will sleep better in a room that is cool (less than 75°F). Also, avoid using your child's bedroom for "time out" or other punishment. You want your child to think of the bedroom as a good place, not a bad one.
- **Snack:** Your child should not go to bed hungry. A light snack (such as milk and cookies) before bed is a good idea. Heavy meals within an hour or two of bedtime, however, may interfere with sleep.
- **Caffeine:** Your child should avoid caffeine for at least 3 to 4 hours before bedtime, although it's best to avoid it totally. Caffeine can be found in many types of soda, energy drinks, coffee, iced tea, and chocolate.
- **Evening activities:** The hour before bed should be a quiet time. Your child should not get involved in high-energy activities, such as rough play or playing outside, or stimulating activities such as computer games.
- **Television:** Keep the television set out of your child's bedroom. Children can easily develop the bad habit of "needing" the television to fall asleep. It is also much more difficult to control your child's television viewing if the set is in the bedroom. Keep all other electronic devices out of the bedroom too, such as computers, cell phones, and hand-held computer games.
- **Naps:** Naps should be geared to your child's age and developmental needs. However, very long naps or too many naps should be avoided, as too much daytime sleep can result in your child sleeping less at night.
- **Exercise:** Your child should spend time outside every day and get daily exercise.