

Keeping to a regular bedtime routine can be difficult, but it can help improve the quality of your child's sleep. For some children, irregular sleeping hours can be problematic. Setting a regular bedtime schedule can really help children get the right amount of sleep. It's important to devise a routine that works for you and your child and to stick to it.



Relaxation techniques to aid sleep

Winding down is a critical stage in preparing for bed. There are many ways to relax:

- A warm (not hot) bath will help the body reach a temperature where it's most likely to rest.
- Relaxation exercises, such as light yoga stretches, will help relax their muscles.
- Relaxation CDs work by relaxing the listener with carefully chosen words and gentle hypnotic music and sound effects.
- Reading a book or listening to the radio will relax the mind by distracting it from any worries or anxieties.
- "Everyone will have their own way of relaxing," says Alexander. If you need more advice on methods of relaxation, see your GP.

Avoid TVs in the bedroom

The bedroom should be a relaxed environment. Experts say that bedrooms are strongly associated with sleep, but that certain things weaken the association. These include TVs, other electronic gadgets, light or noise, and a bad mattress or uncomfortable bed. If these things are present, we subconsciously no longer think of the bedroom as purely for sleep. The bedroom needs to be dark, quiet and tidy. It should smell fresh and be kept at

a temperature of 18-24°C. A comfortable bed is essential. Research by The Sleep Council shows that a good-quality mattress and bed frame will give you an extra hour's sleep a night.

Dealing with sleeping problems

One of the first things your GP or sleep expert will get you to do is to keep a sleep diary for your child as part of diagnosing any sleep problems. A sleep diary might reveal lifestyle habits or experiences in your child's day-to-day activities that contribute to sleep problems. A sleep diary could include answers to the following questions:

- What were your child's sleeping times?
- How long did it take them to get to sleep?
- How many times did they wake up during the night?
- How long did each awakening last?
- How long did they sleep in total?
- Did they do any exercise shortly before going to bed?
- Did they take any naps during the day or evening?
- Has anything made them anxious or upset?



For more information, help and support go to www.choosewellmanchester.org.uk or visit NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk

Choose the right care

How much is enough?

The following are the approximate number of hours that a child needs at each age, as recommended by the Millpond Children's Sleep Clinic:

5 years:	11 hours	11 year:	9.5 hours
6 years:	10.75 hours	12 years:	9.25 hours
7 years:	10.5 hours	13 years:	9.25 hours
8 years:	10.25 hours	14 years:	9 hours
9 years:	10 hours	15 years:	8.75 hours
10 years:	9.75 hours	16 years:	8.5 hours

What to do next...



Choose care at home if...

- Your child sleeps normally
- Your child has occasional disturbed nights - this is normal



Choose Your GP if...

- Your child's sleeping problems last for more than a few weeks



Call 999 A&E if...

- There are no reasons why you should need to go to A&E for problems with sleeping
- A&E is for urgent, life-threatening illness and injury



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