



How Much Sleep do Children Need?

One question that is asked frequently is “how much sleep does my child need?”. It is normal for parents to feel worried about whether their child is getting enough sleep. Just like adults, each child’s sleep requirements will differ greatly. Some children will sleep more than others and the amount of sleep each child needs can also be impacted by other factors.

The table below shows the general recommended sleep time for children at different stages of development. This information should be used as a guideline and it’s more important to focus on sleep quality, not quantity, and establish a good bedtime routine. These ranges are for total sleep including at night and during naps.

	Age Range	Recommended Hours of Sleep
Newborn	0-3 months old	14-17 hours
Infant	4-11 months old	12-16 hours
Toddler	1-2 years old	11-14 hours
Preschool	3-5 years old	10-14 hours
School-age	6-12 years old	9-12 hours
Teenagers	13-18 years old	8-10 hours

Source: NHS England 2020

Top Tips for Good Sleep

- **Create a Routine:** A consistent bedtime routine² lets your child’s body and mind know that it’s time to settle down and prepare for sleep. The actual routine can be specific to your child, but it should last around 20 minutes and consist of three to four quiet, soothing activities such as putting on PJs, brushing teeth, a warm bath, and reading. Bedtime routines provide children with a sense of security, familiarity and comfort.

Powered by:



- **Set a Consistent Bedtime:** A sleep schedule works with your child’s natural biological clock to promote feeling sleepy with regularity. Bedtimes are most useful when they’re consistent, so try to keep the same bedtime on weekends as on school nights. Altering bedtimes during the weekend will make it more difficult for kids to maintain their normal weekday schedules.
- **Implement a Screen Curfew:** Mobile devices, TVs, and tablets emit a type of blue light that suppresses melatonin, a hormone that promotes sleep. Children may be more susceptible to the effects of light from screens. Screen time also stimulates the brain, making it harder to wind down for sleep. Electronic devices should be kept out of the bedroom and ideally not used within one hour of bedtime.
- **Activity and Exercise:** Physical activity is proven to help people of all ages to sleep better. Most children need at least one hour of exercise per day. Just make sure to avoid vigorous activity within two hours of bedtime. Otherwise, your child may feel over stimulated and find it harder to fall asleep.
- **Avoid Scary or Violent Content:** Feeling scared or worried is a common reason kids can’t sleep. Scary or violent movies, TV, video games, and even books in the evening have been linked to disturbed sleep in children.
- **Room Temperature:** The body and brain both cool down in preparation for sleep, and this can be disrupted by a stuffy bedroom. Think about having a thermometer in your child’s room so you can measure the temperature and adjust it if needed.
- **Noise:** Research suggests that even mild sound disturbances can impact on the quality of sleep, even if the sleeper never awakens. Consider noise-blocking curtains to cut down on street noise. You can also use a fan or white noise machine to drown out unpredictable or distracting sounds. When speaking to your child around bedtime try to use a quiet and calm voice
- **Light Level:** Start dimming indoor lights as bedtime approaches (using lamps rather than “big lights”) and keep your child’s bedroom as dark as possible. This promotes normal melatonin production and supports the child’s normal body clock. If your child is afraid of the dark, a small nightlight is okay.
- **Soothing smells:** Calming scents like Lavender can have mild sedative effects. You might try using bedtime bath products, essential oils, a room diffuser, or dried potpourri sachet to provide a soothing, sleep-inducing smell.

Source: The Sleep Foundation 2020

Powered by:



Implementing sleep strategies and routines takes consistency and time to be effective. It is important to remember all children are different and you might need to adapt some of the strategies, depending on how your child responds.

References

NHS England: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-much-sleep-do-kids-need/>

The Sleep Foundation: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/children-and-sleep/sleep-strategies-kids>

Powered by:

