

Sleep

Bedtime Routine Tips

- Allow your child to choose what pajamas to wear.
- Include a wind down time about a half hour before bed.
- Have a consistent bed time and stick to it whenever possible.
- Follow the same routine every night. For example, a typical bedtime routine might look like this: story, goodnight kiss, lights off, eyes closed for sleep. When you follow the same routine every night children will more readily accept the final steps.
- If your child gets up, leaves the room or calls for you, offer comfort, but do not become a source of entertainment. Say "I love you," then put your child back to bed. Repeat these steps until the child is ready to stay in bed. Repeat until they stay in bed.



Photograph by Nancy Munoz



Photograph by Paula Cartwright

Misbehavior: Could Sleep be the Culprit?

Is your child irritable? Having trouble making decisions or controlling emotions? Having trouble following rules or getting along with others? If so, your child might not be getting enough sleep! Although these behaviors could have other causes, lack of sleep is stressful for children's bodies and minds. Without enough sleep, children are often less flexible, more emotional, and less focused.

Why is sleep important?

- ⇒ Sleep helps preschoolers learn.
- ⇒ Sleep helps bones, muscles, and skin grow.
- ⇒ Sleep helps a child's body recover.
- ⇒ Sleep is when new pathways in your brain are formed.
- ⇒ Preschoolers need 11-13 hours of sleep.



Photograph by Timothy O'Brien

A few simple rules

- Limit food and drink before bedtime; avoiding stimulants (like caffeine).
- Tuck your child in while he or she is sleepy, but still awake.
- You cannot force a child to sleep, but you can have a rule that they must stay in bed quietly.

Set the stage

- Make your child's bedroom cozy.
- Use the bed only for sleeping, not watching TV or playing videogames.
- Play soft, soothing music or create white noise with a fan.
- Keep the bedroom cool and dark at bedtime.

Frequently Asked Questions

Should I wait to put children to bed after they've fallen asleep?
No, instead put them to bed while they are drowsy .

Should I let my children nap? (I thought this would keep them up at night!) *Yes, surprisingly, napping is important for many children. Those who nap well tend to be less cranky and sleep better through the night. All children nap differently though! Naps help children be optimally alert during awake times, which has an impact on learning and development.*

UW-Extension Family Living Programs

"Raising Kids, Eating Right, Spending Smart, Living Well"



[Link To References](#)

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