

# Healthy Sleep & Relaxation Tips



Good sleep is important for your child's physical and mental wellbeing. A relaxing and regular bedtime routine is an important way to help your child get a good night's sleep. Doing the same relaxing things in the same order and at the same time each night promotes good sleep and allows your child to thrive cognitively. This means sticking to regular sleep and wake times.

## How Much Sleep Do We Need?

3-6 Years Old	7-12 Years Old	12-18 Years Old	18-65 Years Old	65+ Years Old
				
<b>10-12</b> Hours Per Night	<b>10-11</b> Hours Per Night	<b>8-9</b> Hours Per Night	<b>7-9</b> Hours Per Night	<b>7-8</b> Hours Per Night



If children have a poor sleep routine and don't get enough sleep, they might:

- Become easily annoyed.
- Underperform at school.
- Struggle with friend relationships.
- Seek constant stimulation.
- Experience concentration problems.
- Become tired and exhausted.
- Develop weight problems.

## Why Do Children Need Sleep?

### For the brain to...

- Remember things learned.
- Pay attention and concentrate.
- Solve problems and think of new ideas.

### For the body, so that...

- Muscles, bones, and skin can grow.
- Muscles, skin and other parts can fix injuries.
- Children can stay healthy and fight sickness.

A healthy sleep pattern is as important as healthy eating and exercise for children to develop in a balanced way. There are a number of factors that help to support a healthy sleep routine – often referred to as 'Sleep Hygiene'.

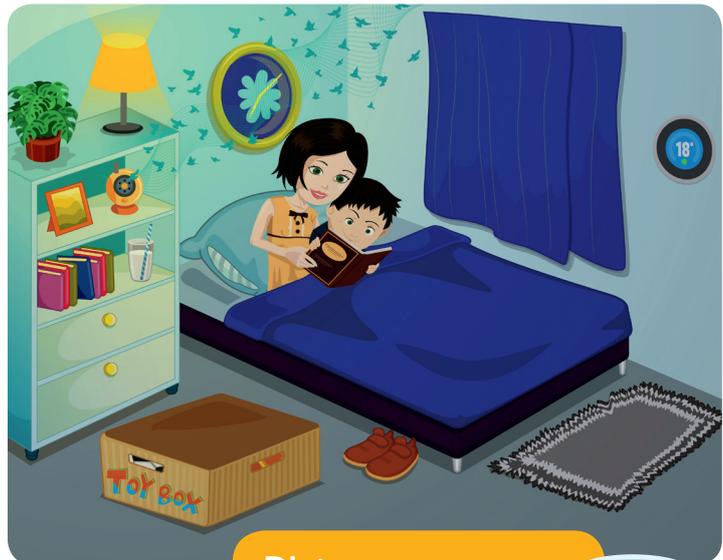
These relate to exercise, diet and environmental factors!



## Environment

The bedroom should be a relaxed environment that's favourable for sleeping...

- A dark, quiet and tidy bedroom is ideal. Blinds and thick curtains both help, and toys can be put to bed by covering them up at night to avoid distractions.
- Glow lights can be used but preferably if kept on all night.
- Try to ensure your child's bedroom smells fresh (lavender is great for relaxation!) and is kept at a cool temperature.
- Mattresses, sheets and pillows should be comfortable to prevent your child from waking up tired and achy. A hot water bottle or a good pair of bed socks are great if it's cold!
- All bedrooms should be 'screen-free zones' because the light from electronic gadgets (e.g. tablets, smartphones, TVs) can affect how easily children fall asleep. Encourage your child to stop using screens an hour before bedtime!



## Diet

It's important to avoid sugary foods and drinks or caffeinated drinks before bedtime. Milk or water are better choices!



## Exercise

It's important that children take part in 60 minutes of physical activity every day, but rigorous exercise an hour before bedtime should be avoided. Simple hand-eye coordination tasks are a great alternative, for instance doing puzzles, colouring-in and light reading. Why not read a story together?

## Relaxation

Children and young people can feel worried, angry and anxious at times which can cause them to have trouble sleeping. If your child is worried about something, it can be a good idea for them to make a list of things that can be revisited the next day. Relaxation activities are a good distraction from worrying thoughts and can reduce tension in the body. There are many ways your child can wind down before bed. For instance, listening to soft, steady sounds of nature (e.g. birdsong, wind, waves) can be soothing. A warm bath may also help your child relax and get them in the right frame of mind for sleeping.

Why not ask your child to stretch like a cat? A simple relaxation exercise for arms and shoulders...

## Stretch Like a Cat

- Pretend you are a furry, lazy cat and you just woke up from a nap.
- Stretch your arms out in front of you. Now raise them way up high over your head. Feel the pull in your shoulders.
- Stretch higher and try to touch the ceiling. (Hold for 10 seconds). Great!
- Let them drop very quickly and feel how good it is to be relaxed.
- It feels good and warm and lazy.



## Keep a Sleep Diary

We gave your child a sleep diary at the end of today's workshop – make sure your child completes this. It can highlight lifestyle habits or daily activities that contribute to sleeplessness!