

Sleep Strategies for Children

- ✓ Establish a regular time for bed each night and try not to vary from it. Similarly, the waking time should not differ from weekday to weekend by more than one to one and a half hours.
- ✓ It is usually best to make sure that the temperature in the bedroom is comfortable, the room is quiet, and that the room is dark.
- ✓ If your children needs to reassurance of some light, use a low intensity night light or use a light with a dimmer that can reduce the intensity of the light as much as feels ‘safe’ to your child.
- ✓ Reading for about a half-hour prior to ‘lights out’ may help.
- ✓ Consider talking with your son or daughter prior to lights out and review some positive aspect of the day, but avoid exciting things that they may be looking forward to.
- ✓ Create a relaxing bedtime routine. If they take a bath, allow him/her to remain in the tub until the water is slightly tepid . . . then immediately to bed without delay.
- ✓ Some exercise may be useful in fostering some tiredness, but not within two hours of bedtime.
- ✓ A back massage when you’re tucking them in might be useful.
- ✓ Try some ‘white noise’ if disturbing sounds in the environment is unavailable.
- ✓ Have him or her in their PJs for at least an hour prior to bedtime (to set the stage for sleep).
- ✓ Do not give children food or drinks with caffeine less than six hours before bedtime.
- ✓ Yoga, meditation, breathing exercises, and guided imagery may be especially helpful in preparing the body for the sleep.
- ✓ Avoid computer, tablet, or TV for at least 30-45 minutes prior to sleep.
- ✓ Consider lower the light level in the home prior to bedtime (to stimulate the natural production of Melatonin).
- ✓ Avoid giving children large meals close to bedtime.
- ✓ Make the time after-dinner as relaxing as possible because too much stimulation close to bedtime can keep children awake.
- ✓ There should be no TV or music playing while the child is going to sleep. Occasionally, some fearful children find background noise (like a TV) reassuring – if so, keep the volume down and turn it off once they are asleep.
- ✓ Consider the use of Melatonin, a natural sleep aid) prior to bedtime, but also think about other medications that are taken at bedtime that might have an impact on sleep.
- ✓ If your child takes a stimulant medication for ADD/ADHD, a dose after 3pm might cause a sleep problem. Review this concern with your physician if sleep may be impacted by medication.
- ✓ When you “tuck them in,” consider reviewing a couple of things that they did that you appreciated. Something like, “Nice job with the spelling test . . . your studying really paid off.” Avoid talking about negative topics as your child may ruminate on these topic while trying to go to sleep.

