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Up All Night? How to Get Your Child to Sleep Better

Post Date: **March 2018** | Category: **Baby, Kids & Mom**

How a good night's sleep impacts your kids



Bedtime doesn't have to be a struggle.

Some kids seem to be naturally good sleepers from the time they're born. Others, not so much. If you have a child who often struggles to drift off or who frequently wakes up during the night, don't despair: Helping your child sleep through the night might not be easy at first, but there are many things you can do so that everyone in your family gets the rest they need.

Why Sleep Matters

Getting an adequate amount of quality rest is especially important for children, whose brains and bodies are rapidly developing. Sure, a child who skimps on sleep on a given night might be cranky the next day, but if the pattern

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continues the impact on mood can go even deeper. Research has shown that children who routinely get less sleep than their peers have a higher chance of becoming depressed or anxious, whereas well-rested children are likely to be full of energy and in good health.

In addition to improving their mood, a good night's sleep can ensure your child is putting their best foot forward at school. Adequate sleep helps kids learn, not only because they are able to focus better in school than their sleep-deprived peers, but short-term information is integrated into long-term memory during deep sleep. This is an important part of the learning process, especially for young children.

Of course, sleep also plays an important role in physical health. While you sleep, your body produces proteins that fight infection, so kids who snooze more may end up with a stronger immune system. Lack of sleep may raise your child's risk for issues like high blood pressure and obesity, too.

How Much Is Enough?

Everyone's sleep needs are different, but the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) offers the following guidelines:

- Infants 4 to 12 months: 12 to 16 hours a day (including naps)
- Children 1 to 2 years: 11 to 14 hours a day (including naps)
- Children 3 to 5 years: 10 to 13 hours a day (which might include a nap)
- Children 6 to 12 years: 9 to 12 hours a day
- Teens 13 to 18 years: 8 to 10 hours a day

Consistency also matters; your child should go to sleep and wake up around the same time every day.

How to Help Your Child Sleep through the Night

Establish a Routine

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A calming pre-bedtime ritual is very important for helping your child sleep through the night. Research has found that parents who gave their babies a bath, applied lotion, shared some quiet time (think cuddling and lullabies), and got their little ones into bed within thirty minutes of the bath had better luck getting them to stay asleep longer. For bonus benefits, use [a lavender-scented lotion](#) post-bathtime for some relaxing aromatherapy.

Avoid Over-Scheduling

As kids get older, it's common for them to get booked up with sports practice, music lessons, and other extracurriculars—and then there's homework! Try to wrap up these activities as early as possible so your child has plenty of time to wind down before bed.

Limit Screen Time

Setting boundaries with technology is becoming increasingly important in today's digital age. Research has shown that young children (between the ages of three and five) who watch TV, use the computer, or play video games after seven p.m. are more likely to have trouble sleeping than those who power down earlier. At least one hour of quiet time before bed is ideal, so set a schedule and stick to it.

Keep It Cool, Dark, and Quiet

At bedtime, a small light—[like this nightlight from GE](#)—is OK if your child is afraid of the dark, but otherwise the darker the better. Invest in blackout curtains, or, if your child is old enough, encourage them to wear a [sleep mask](#). Your child's room also needs to be quiet, but if you live on a busy street or if your home is especially noisy you can try placing a white noise machine in their room and setting it to a low volume.

If you feel like you've tried everything and your child is still struggling, just remember that sometimes these things take time. You may not see results immediately after establishing a new routine, but after a few weeks, things may start to improve. Stay positive, be patient, and soon you'll all be getting the rest you need.

By Barbara Brody

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- January 2014
- December 2013
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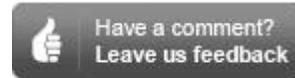
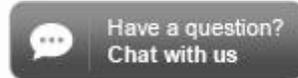
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