

Insomnia, Sleep Troubles & Sleep Hygiene:

Children (3-12 years)

Introduction

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2023), sleep problems affect 25-50% of children and 40% of adolescents. Because of this, understanding **why** sleep is important (as well as your child's specific sleep needs), is crucial for promoting health and well-being. Through education, sleep hygiene, and age-appropriate routines, you can help your child get the rest they need!

How much sleep do children and adolescents need?

- ❖ **1-2 years: 11-14 hours**
- ❖ **3-5 years: 10-13 hours**
- ❖ **6-12 years: 9-11 hours**

Remember... while these are firm guidelines, every child is different and the amount of sleep they need will depend on several things such as age, activity level, illness, or life stressors.

Why is Sleep Important?

Sleep plays a key role in children's development. Depending on the sleep your child is getting, important areas of functioning and growth could be positively or negatively impacted.

Good Sleep	Poor Sleep
❖ Higher alertness and attention ❖ Happier mood ❖ Improved cognitive capabilities ❖ Resiliency ❖ Learning and memory ❖ In toddlers specifically, napping can be crucial for memory consolidation, executive attention, and motor skill development!	❖ Decrease in focus and attention ❖ Irritable or grumpy mood ❖ Hyperactive behavior ❖ May lead to excessive daytime sleepiness ❖ Poor appetite

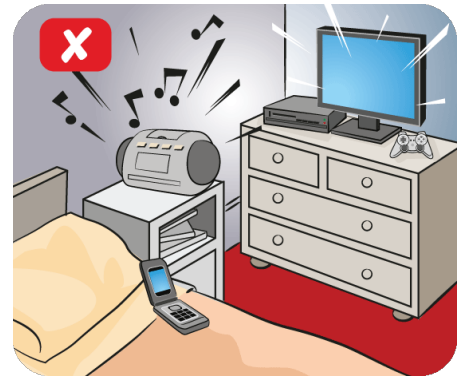
Helping Your Child Get Good Sleep

Sleep needs can change depending on your child's age; however, a good nighttime routine is always recommended! For children ages 3-12, a nighttime routine may include the following:

- ❖ Taking a warm shower, brushing teeth, putting on pajamas
- ❖ Turning off electronics including phones, tablets, televisions, and other screens or bright lights
- ❖ Reading a book, listening to music, or drawing

To help make your child comfortable, remember to tend to their senses:

- ❖ Have their bedroom be a “no-screen” zone and turn off any bright lights
- ❖ Keep their bedroom at a slightly cooler temperature
- ❖ Keep their bedroom environment quiet or use a white noise machine
- ❖ Make sure their bed and mattress are comfortable



Additional Tips:

To alleviate anxiety or lack of control, allow your child to make their own choices when it comes to what pajamas to wear or what book to read.

To strengthen the connection between sleep and the bedroom, have school age children do homework in another area of the house.

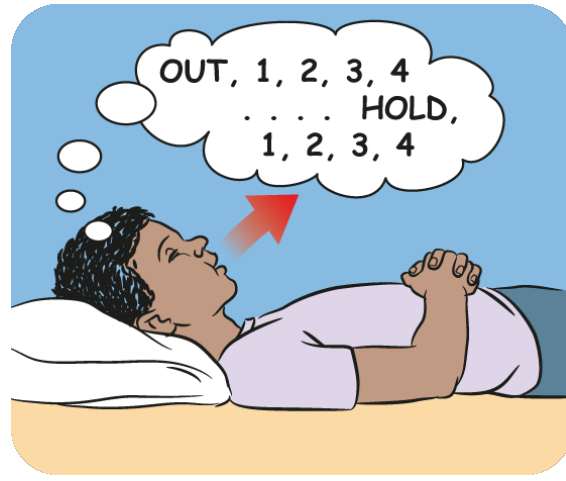
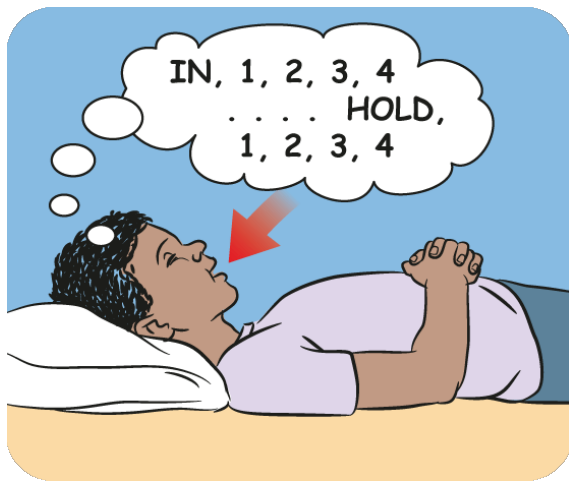
Waking up at the same time each morning is important too – even on the weekends!

How we sleep at night has a lot to do with how we spend our day... make sure to exercise – children need around one hour per day. Physical activity has been proven to help children fall asleep and stay asleep.

Relaxation Exercises for Nighttime

Start by validating fears and encouraging bravery. According to the Child Mind Institute (2023), parents can say things like, “I understand you’re feeling scared and that’s a really hard feeling,” as a form of support. Then, remind your child you are going to work together to overcome their worry, while letting them know you are confident in them!

Deep breathing exercises. To decrease anxiety, help your child focus on their breathing. Have your child breathe in through their nose, and out through their mouth.



Guided Imagery and Visualization. Have your child imagine a “safe place” in their mind while they are trying to fall asleep. To further ground themselves, ask them to name 5 things they can see, 4 things they can touch, 3 things they can hear, 2 things they can smell, and 1 thing they can hear in their safe place.



Schedule Worry Time or Worry Time Jar. Our worries and fears tend to feel bigger and scarier at nighttime. Encourage your child to schedule “worry time” during the day, where they can think about, talk about, or journal their worries. A “worry jar” can also be a great part of your child’s nighttime routine. Have them write down their worry and put it into the jar, to “separate” them from their worry and decrease anxiety.

Additional Materials & Resources:

Websites:

Pediatric Sleep Counsel: <https://www.babysleep.com/advice/sleep-problems/>

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry: <https://www.aacap.org/>

American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://www.aap.org/>

Parenting Solutions: <https://parenting-solutions.org/>

Raising Children: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/sleep/sleep-problems/persistent-sleep-problems>

Sleep Foundation: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/baby-sleep>

Books: Mindful Moments at Bedtime (Paloma Rossa), Goodnight Yoga: A Pose-by-Pose Bedtime Story (Mariam Gates), The Big Book of Superhero Bedtime Stories (Noah Smith)

References:

Adapted from: Child Mind Institute (2023)

Adapted from: Pediatric Sleep Council (2023)

Adapted from: Raising Children Network (2023)

Adapted from: Sanford Health (2023)

Adapted from: Sleep Foundation (2023)