



SLEEP HYGIENE TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

Understanding sleep problems in children and teens

All children and teens should have healthy sleep habits. Parents should provide support for healthy sleep habits. Reaching the recommended amount of sleep for each child’s or adolescent’s age helps with focus, behavior, memory, mood, quality of life, and mental and physical health.

Age	Recommended Hours of Sleep Every 24 Hours
Infants 4-12 months	12-16 hours including naps
Children 1-2 years	11-14 hours including naps
Children 3-5 years	10-13 hours including naps
Children 6-12 years	9-12 hours
Teenagers 13-18 years	8-10 hours

Some sleep problems that affect children and teenagers are:

- Frequent awakenings at night
- Talking during sleep
- Trouble falling asleep
- Waking up crying
- Feeling sleepy during the day
- Having nightmares
- Bedwetting
- Teeth grinding and clenching
- Sleepwalking
- Waking up early

Most sleep problems are because of poor sleep habits or anxiety at bedtime about falling asleep. Separation anxiety and nightmares are common in childhood. With regular bedtime routines most sleep problems decrease.

Good sleep hygiene habits

- Set a regular bedtime routine and waking time with a clear schedule for all days of the week.
 - Provide warnings about approaching bedtime.
 - Predictable bedtime routine such as bath time or picking out clothes for the next day, brushing teeth, and story time.
 - Bedtime should occur when drowsy but while still awake. Falling asleep in other places could create bad habits that are difficult to eliminate.
 - Delays of 15-30 minutes may be used if the child is not drowsy at bedtime. Gradually advance the bedtime if this occurs.
- The bedroom should be cool, quiet, and comfortable.
 - Eliminate “screens” or “blue light” from the bedroom. Teens charge cell phone in another room; might need an alarm clock that is not a phone.
 - Only use the bedroom for sleep, not for punishment.
 - A white noise machine or sound machine may be helpful to have on throughout the night.
 - Minimize light coming into the room (e.g., use blackout curtains, eliminate lights on at night, or reduce to one dim night light even if this has to be done gradually).
- Increase physical activity during the day.



- Do relaxing activities before bedtime.
 - Turn off all screens 1-2 hours before bedtime.
 - Avoid stimulating activities before bedtime such as video games, exercise, or rowdy play.
 - Relaxation techniques may be helpful such as deep breathing or positive imagery.
- Avoid chocolate, caffeine, and heavy food or drinks before bedtime.
- Parents should not be in room when child falls asleep. There are 3 main ways to go about removing parents from the room:
 - **Extinction:** Put the child to bed, leave, ignore inappropriate behavior.
 - **Graduated extinction with check-ins:** Put the child to bed, leave, provide periodic check-ins (short intervals at first that gradually get longer). You can say, "I'll come back in X minutes." Or you can make up a boring reason to leave: "I'm going to go brush my teeth. I'll be right back."
 - **Graduated extinction with slow removal:** Put the child to bed and gradually move further away from the bed each night or every few nights.
- Worry time should not be at bedtime. If worries persistently come up at bedtime, try having a designated "worry time" earlier in the day to talk about concerns with parents or journal.
- Keep a sleep diary including naps, sleep, wake times, and activities for a minimum of 2 weeks to find patterns and problem areas to target.

Sleep Tips for Children	Sleep Tips for Adolescents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfort objects may help with feeling secure and safe when parent or caregiver is not present. • Check-ins should be brief and boring with the goal to reassure the child they are okay and the parent is present. • Bedtime pass: can be exchanged for one "free" trip out of bed or one parent visit after bedtime. If the pass is not used, then could be exchanged for a positive reward (positive reinforcement). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid alcohol, tobacco, sleep aids, and marijuana that can interfere with your natural sleep cycle. • If you are awake and tossing and turning, get out of bed and complete a low-stimulating activity until feeling tired. This prevents the bed from being associated with sleeplessness. • Avoid daytime napping, such as sleeping after school.

Book recommendations

- *What To Do When You Dread Your Bed: Kid's Guide to Overcoming Problems with Sleep* by Dawn Huebner, PhD
- *The Sheep Who Wouldn't Sleep — A Story That Teaches Self-Soothing and Mindfulness* by Susan Rich Brooke
- *It's Never Too Late to Sleep Train: The Low-Stress Way to High-Quality Sleep for Babies, Kids, and Parents* by Craig Canapari, MD
- *Become Your Child's Sleep Coach: The Bedtime Doctor's 5-Step Guide, Ages 3-10* by Lynelle Schneeberg, PhD
- *Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child, 4th Edition: A Step-by-Step Program for a Good Night's Sleep* by Marc Weissbluth, MD
- *Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems* by Richard Ferber