

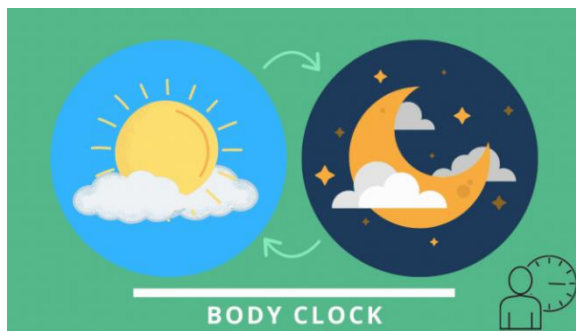
Sleep

The Importance of Sleep

Sleep is vital to children's health, wellbeing, learning and development. It is important to ensure children have the correct amount of sleep so they have enough energy for the next day's activities.



Facts About Sleep



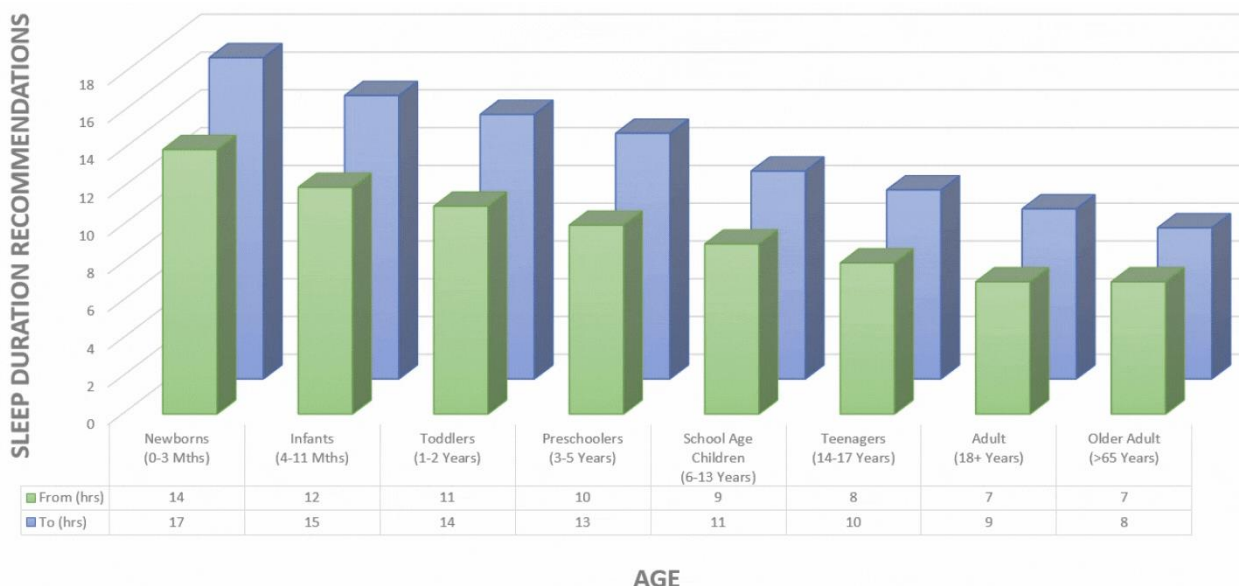
The circadian rhythm or internal 'body clock' tells us when to sleep and when to wake up in the morning regulating our sleep pattern. Moving in a 24 hour daily cycle the circadian rhythm responds mainly to daylight.

We all go through sleep cycles; moving through light sleep, deep sleep, dream sleep, waking and then going back to sleep; each of these cycles lasts for approximately 90 minutes.

Brief waking after each cycle is part of a normal sleep pattern.

Sleep Duration

Sleep needs change as children get older. It helps to have an idea of how much sleep your child needs as this will be different depending on their age. All children are unique and some will need more or less sleep than others.





Daytime naps can help prevent young children becoming overtired, however these should be scheduled to ensure your child does not have a prolonged nap in the late afternoon which is too close to bedtime.

[Sleep Foundation.org](https://www.sleepfoundation.org) publish informative, up-to-date research about topics related to sleep and health.

Sleep Support Videos

The aim of the sleep support videos is to:

- Help you understand sleep in children and young people
- Help you understand good sleep practice
- Offer you a range of strategies to help you to feel more confident in managing your child's sleep.

Please be aware that it may take several months for any strategies you use to improve your child's sleep to become effective.





Sleep Diary

It is often really helpful to make a sleep diary. It would be recommended that you keep this for two weeks. This will help you identify any patterns around the bedtime routine and sleep and have a log of where the problem areas are.

Sometimes it becomes clear that just a small change in your routine, for example, having supper before bath and then straight to bed every night, can make a significant difference to your child/young person's understanding of what you are asking them to do.

Sleep Diary 	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Time and Length of nap(s) in the day							
Time started preparing for bed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any problems here? If so, what did you do? 							
Time in bed at night <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where? How long did he/she take to settle? What did you do? 							
Time went to sleep							
How many times did he/she wake? (note length of each waking)							
What did you do when he/she woke?							
Time parents go to bed							
Time woke in the morning							

We have provided a [template of a sleep diary](#) for you to print off and use.

How to Help Your Child to Develop Good Sleep Habits



When babies are put into bed drowsy but not asleep, they are more likely to learn to 'self-soothe'. This means they will be able to fall asleep independently and also go back to sleep when they wake during the night.

For those who have been soothed until they fall asleep this becomes a habit and they may become dependent on this routine to fall asleep and when they wake during the night.

By establishing a good bedtime routine which helps your child to settle to sleep and to stay asleep will support them to develop a healthy independent sleep pattern.

- **During the Day**

Encourage your child to be active during the day and spend some of the day outside. This will give them exposure to natural daylight and help them to feel tired at the end of the day with the benefit of a more restful sleep.



- **Food and Drink**

Encourage a healthy diet with regular meal times. Avoid a large meal too close to bedtime. Having a light snack at bedtime will ensure your child is not hungry and can help them to settle to sleep e.g. a drink of milk and slice of whole-meal toast.



Caffeine has a stimulant effect and can prevent people from feeling tired. Caffeine is found in tea, coffee, chocolate, cola, fizzy drinks and energy drinks. These should always be avoided in the afternoon and evening and should be limited throughout the day.

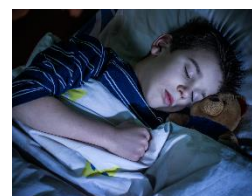
- **Bedtime**

It is important to decide on a bedtime which is suitable for your child's age. Putting them to bed at the same time each night and waking them at the same time each morning; including at weekends will strengthen their body clock and help them to develop a regular sleep and wake cycle.



- **The Bedroom**

To help your child get a good night's sleep there may be changes you can make within their bedroom. The room should be a comfortable temperature being neither too warm nor too cold. A quiet, dark, calm environment with toys tidied away will encourage sleep. Use a nightlight if your child is frightened of the dark. Where possible reduce any external noise within the household.



Prepare your Child for Bed - Bedtime Routine

A consistent bedtime routine is important as it teaches your child what to expect in the time leading up to bedtime.

All electronic devices should be turned off at least one hour before bedtime this includes T.V, computers, games consoles and mobile phones. The blue light from screens stimulates brain activity which delays the onset of sleep.

Help them to become involved in a quiet, relaxing activity such as colouring/drawing or building a jigsaw in the lead up to bedtime.

Baths are helpful but only if your child finds them relaxing. Ideally a bath should take place at least 30 minutes before bedtime.

The bedtime routine should last about 20-30 minutes and have an end-point which your child will know means it is time to go to sleep, such as turning out the light and saying goodnight and leaving the room.

7:40

Put on Pyjamas

Brush Teeth

Go to Toilet

Go to Bed

7:40

7:45

Read a Bedtime Story

7:40

7:45

7:55

Give hugs and kisses and tell your child *'It's night time, time to go to sleep'*

7:40

7:45

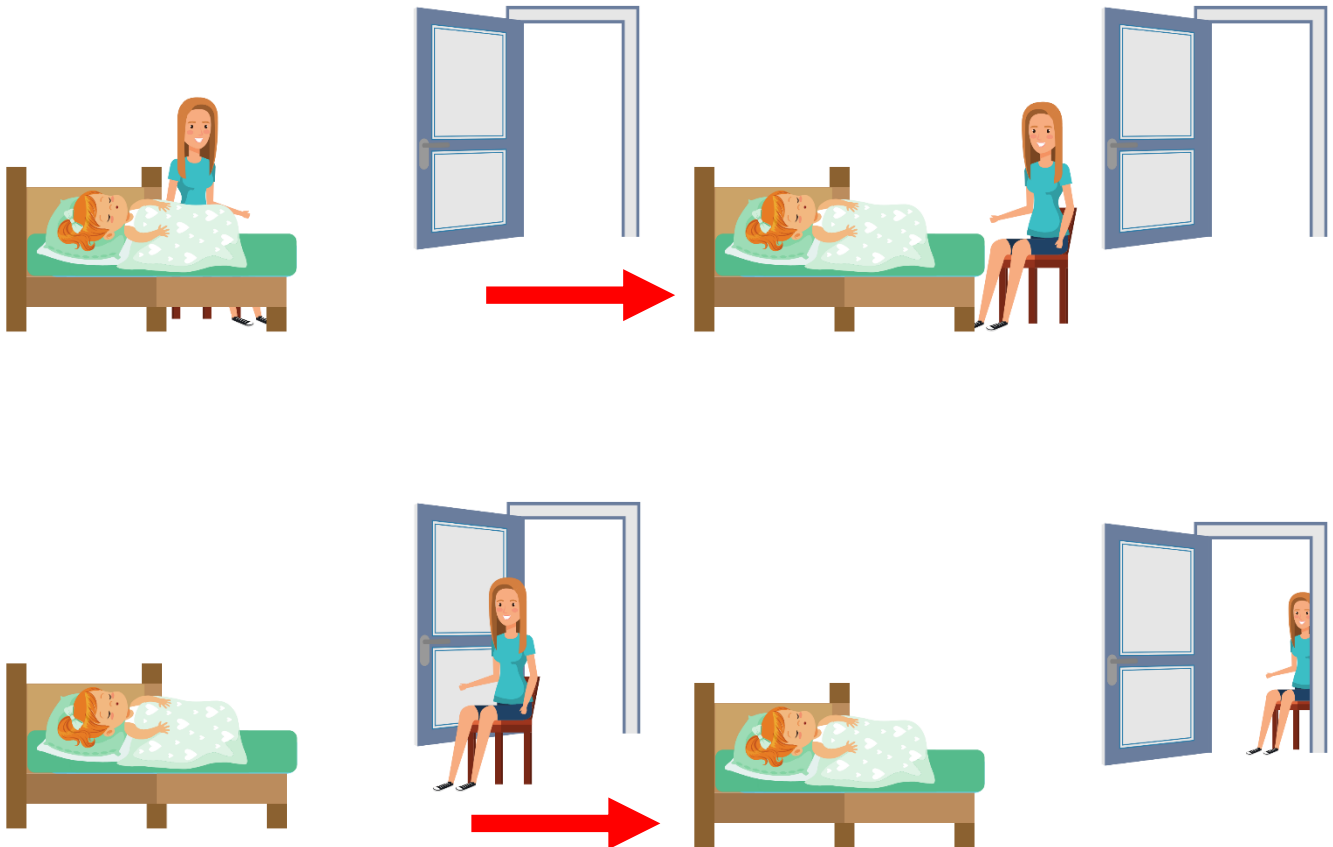
7:55

8:00

Leave Room

Gradual Stages of Change

If your child will not settle to sleep by themselves and needs you with them this is a useful method of helping them to learn to settle to sleep alone. Rather than leaving your child to cry, you can gradually increase the distance between you and your child over a period of time until they no longer need you beside them to fall asleep. This can take a period of weeks and should begin with you sitting on a chair by the child's bedside and gradually moving the distance of the chair from the bedside until you are able to sit outside the door. If your child wakes you should return to the stage you were at when you had settled your child to sleep.



Useful Resources

Please see below links to charities offering support and resources for families to access.

- **Sleep Scotland**
[Sleep Scotland](#) is the UK's longest-established children's sleep charity. Since 1998, they have promoted healthy sleep for children and young people across the UK and Ireland through sleep counselling, education, and by raising sleep awareness.

There are sleep advisors available to offer advice and support to parents and carers, or young people on 0800 138 6565 or sleepsupport@sleepscotland.org.

The **sleep support line** is open from Monday to Thursday (10am until 4pm).

Click here for more information on [Sleep Scotland Support](#).



- **Contact**

[Contact](#) has an information booklet for parents of disabled children to help your child sleep.

Click here for more information on the [Helping You and Your Child Sleep Booklet](#).

- **Visual Supports**

[The National Autistic Society \(NAS\)](#) has provided visual supports that can be used to communicate with people on the autism spectrum and children with speech, language and communication needs. They are adaptable, portable and can be used in most situations.

Click here for more information on the [National Autism Society Visual Supports](#).

Products That Might Help

The products below have been selected with the intentions of helping the care and development of children with additional support needs. These products could be an additional resource which parents/carers may find useful to support their child's needs.

- **All In One PJs**

All-in-One Pyjamas that can help your child keep warm, especially if they are inclined to kick off their bedding at night.

Available from a range of outlets.



- **Sleep Training Clock**

Sleep Training Clocks can help children to learn when it's time to get up and when it's time to go back to sleep.

Choose a clock that suits your child, look out for clocks that use images and colours to show day and night.



Available from a range of outlets.

- **Compression Sheet**

Compression sheets provide deep touch pressure which can be calming and help children to fall asleep and stay asleep.

There is little good quality evidence about their effectiveness. Some children and adults find them helpful and others do not.

The sheet fits over the mattress and is open at both ends.





If you choose to try a compression sheet make sure;

- It meets British Standards.
- You follow the manufacturer's guidelines.
- You only use with children over 3 years.
- You check your child can get in and out of the sheet independently before using at night time.

Available from a range of outlets.