

Sleep Difficulties



Ensuring your child has adequate sleep is essential for their health and wellbeing. Children who are sleep deprived are grumpy, irritable and may be hyperactive. Lack of sleep affects their growth, health, development and immune system and also their concentration, verbal creativity, abstract thinking and ability to learn.

Why is my child having problems sleeping?

Children's sleep needs can vary and there is a vast range of 'normal'. Some children will require more sleep than others. The amount of sleep an individual child needs can vary from day to day and will be affected by things like illness, growth spurts and leaps in development. If your child is having problems sleeping, contact your child's GP they will try to find out what's causing your child's sleep difficulties. They will ensure your children receives the right treatment.

Things you can do to help

- Healthy sleep routines will help your child (and therefore you!) to get a good night's sleep.
- Do the same things at the same time each night so that your child knows that it is bedtime. Use this time to wind down and have some valued one to one time together. Keep things calm and consistent!
- Dim the lights and switch off the TV, games console, tablet or computer about 1 hour before bedtime. This can help your child fall asleep more easily. The blue light from a screen will keep your child's brain (and yours) awake for longer
- Reassure your child if they wake in the night. Go to them, but try not to interact too much.
- Be prepared to adapt their routine for illness or any big events such as starting nursery or school, or the arrival of a new baby. Some extra reassurance at bedtime may be needed.
- Keep your child's bedroom as dark as possible. A blackout blind may help.

Children of different ages require different amounts of sleep. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) produced a 'Consensus Statement' in 2016 regarding recommended amount of sleep for children and young people. The table below gives an indication of the amount of sleep your child needs on a regular basis to keep them healthy.

Your child's age	Recommended sleep time in 24 hours
Infants 4 to 12 months	12 to 16 hours including naps
Children 1 to 2 years	11 to 14 hours including naps
Children 3 to 5 years	10 to 13 hours including naps
Children 6 to 12 years	9 to 12 hours
Teenagers 13 to 18 years	8 to 10 hours

Who Can Help?

It is useful to consider these questions:

- What are you finding most challenging about your child's sleep?
- Why do you think your child is struggling to sleep well?
- What have you tried before? What worked and what didn't work? What can you learn from this?

If you have tried the above and are still struggling with your child's sleep, talk to a member of the 0-19 Healthy Child Programme by calling Just One Number on 0300 300 0123 or texting Parentline on 07520631590. Their opening hours are 8am-6pm Monday-Friday (excluding bank holidays) and 9am-1pm on Saturdays.

Helpful Links

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-much-sleep-do-kids-need/Tiredness-and-Fatigue>