




How to help your child with Sleep

We all need to have a good night's sleep in order to be physically and mentally healthy. In children, long term sleep deprivation can lead to irritability, disruptive and hyperactive behaviour as well as creating problems for growth and development.

The table below gives a guide to the amount of sleep children need at different ages. There will be individual differences but following these broad guidelines will ensure that your child is able to enjoy their waking time much more and will be able to avoid creating fraught social situations.

Average sleep requirements

Age	Total sleep (hours)	Night sleep (hours)	Naps (number of times)
6 months	14 $\frac{1}{4}$	11	2
9 months	14	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	2
12 months	13 $\frac{3}{4}$	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	2
18 months	13 $\frac{1}{2}$	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	1
2 years	13	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	1
3 years	12	11	1
4 years	11 $\frac{1}{2}$		
5 years	11		
6 years	10 $\frac{3}{4}$		
9 years	10		
12 years	9 $\frac{1}{2}$		
15 years	9		
16+ years	8 $\frac{1}{4}$		

Taken from Dr T Byron and S Baveystock : "Little Angels" 2005. BBC Worldwide Learning.



The following strategies may help your child to have a good night's sleep:

- ☆ It is a good idea to establish the bedroom as a place to sleep and relax, so it is better not to give the child access to a TV or a play station. These tend to stimulate the brain instead of allowing it to gradually switch off. A lava lamp or night-light may help your child to calm. Watch out for teenagers texting each other through the night: mobile phones are best left out of the bedroom.

- ☆ A regular bedtime routine generally helps children to begin the process of calming. This could include having a warm bath, a story and a small milky drink to aid sleep. Going to bed at the same time each day helps the body to get into a pattern of satisfying sleep. The emphasis should be on calm, consistent and relaxing bedtime routines.

- ☆ If your child has difficulty in getting to sleep it would be helpful to consider the following:
 - ⌋ have they had food or drink containing caffeine after 1pm e.g. chocolate, tea, coffee, cocoa, cola?
 - Ⓒ are they sensitive to additives in food and drink that affect their behaviour and would be best avoided?
 - ⌋ have they been over-stimulated by exciting activity in the hour before bedtime?
 - Ⓒ do they have access to stimulating resources in the bedroom?

Signs of sleep deprivation include moodiness, irritability, difficulties in concentrating, variable energy levels and unhappiness.

- ☆ If your child shares the bedroom with an older sibling are you able to manage this so that the younger child's sleep is not disturbed?

☆ For a younger child who wakes regularly during the night the following approaches can be useful:

- ⌋ return the child to bed with minimal attention and fuss. Avoid talking, providing drinks or physical comforting as these are likely to encourage the behaviour to happen again.
- Ⓒ the child may be helped by having a sticker chart encouraging him/her to sleep through the night like a big boy/girl. A reward can be agreed with the child in advance.

For more entrenched sleep difficulties you may want to consult your GP regarding referral to the sleep clinic.

For more information and resources the following websites are useful:

www.nhlbi.nih.gov

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/sleep/starslp/parents/tips.htm

