



Helping Children with sleep problems

Lots of children find it difficult to settle down to sleep and will wake during the night. For some people, this might not be a problem.

If you're happy for your child to go to bed at the same time as you, that's fine. But if you or your child is suffering from lack of sleep, you may like to try some of these suggestions.

Every child is different, so only do what you feel comfortable with and what you think will suit your child.

- Decide what time you want your child to go to bed.
- Close to the time that your child normally falls asleep, start a 20minute "winding down" bedtime routine. Bring this forward by 5 to 10 minutes a week (or 15 minutes if your child has a habit of going to bed very late) until you get to the bedtime you want.
- Set a limit on how much time you spend with your child when you put them to bed. For example, read only one story, then tuck your child in and say goodnight.
- Give your child their favourite toy comforter before settling into bed.
- If your child cries, leave them for 5 to 10 minutes before going back in and settling them down again.
- Don't pick them up or take them back downstairs. If your child gets up, put them back to bed again.
- Leave them a drink of water within reach and dim a light if necessary.
- If you keep checking to see if your child is asleep, you might wake them up, so leave it until you're certain that they're asleep.
- You might have to repeat this routine for several nights.
- If you try this, you will need to be firm and not give in. **BE CONSISTENT**



If your child keeps waking during the night.

If your child is waking, try to work out why,

Are they afraid of the dark? You could use a night light or leave a landing light on.

Is your child waking up because of night fears or bad dreams? If so, try to find out if something is bothering them.

Is your child too hot or too cold? Adjust their bedclothes or the heating in the room and see if that helps.

If there's no obvious cause and your child continues to wake up, cry or demand company, you could try some of the following suggestions.

Teach your child to get back to sleep by themselves. First check that everything is all right. If it is, settle your child down without talking to them. If they want a drink, give them water but don't give them anything to eat. For this approach to work, you need to leave them in their bed. Don't take them downstairs or into your bed. Let them cry for around 5-10 minutes before you check on them. Over the next few nights, gradually increase the amount of time you leave them before checking.

It might take a week or two, but if you keep the routine going, your child should start falling asleep on their own. **CONSISTENCY IS THE KEY**

Tackle it together. If you have a partner, agree between you how to decide what to do in the middle of the night. If you've both agreed what's best for your child, it will be easier to stick to your plan.

Children's nightmares

Nightmares are quite common. Nightmares aren't usually a sign of emotional disturbance. They may happen if your child is anxious about something or has been frightened i.e. by a TV programme, film or story.

After a nightmare, your child will need comfort and reassurance. If your child has a lot of nightmares and you don't know why, talk to your GP or School Nursing Team.

Extra help with children's sleeping problems.

It can take patience, consistency and commitment, but most sleep problems can be solved. If you've tried suggestions on these pages and your child's sleeping is still a problem, talk to your GP or contact the School Nursing Team.

In the meantime, try and find someone else to take over for an occasional night, or someone who your child can stay with. You'll cope better if you can catch up on some sleep yourself

