

Medical problem? Call 1800 022 222. If you need urgent medical help, call triple zero immediately

healthdirect Australia is a free service where you can talk to a nurse or doctor who can help you know what to do.

Sleep tips for children

5-minute read



Key facts

- Healthy sleep means getting enough good quality sleep and having regular sleep routines.
- Sleep is essential for growth, immunity and learning and is important for helping children heal and recover from illness and injury.
- Poor sleep is linked to mental health problems, poor growth and reduced school performance.

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Why is sleep important for my child?

All children need sleep for growth, learning and development. Getting enough sleep is vital for your child's physical health, brain function, emotional wellbeing, safety, and ability to function day to day. Having a good night's sleep can help your child be happier, helps them to concentrate and remember things and improves their behaviour.

Not having enough sleep or not sleeping well can affect how children learn and can lead to mood swings, poor growth and behaviour problems.

How much sleep do children need?

The [amount of sleep](#) your child needs changes as they grow. Everyone is different, but as a guide, children need the following amounts of sleep every night:

- **ages 3 to 5:** 10 to 13 hours (including naps)
- **ages 6 to 12:** 9 to 11 hours
- **ages 13 to 18:** 8 to 10 hours

Tips to help children sleep well

Getting enough sleep is as important for your child as [healthy eating](#) and [exercising](#). Here are some tips to help your child [fall asleep](#), stay asleep and get enough good quality sleep:

- **Establish a sleep schedule:** Make sure your child goes to bed early enough to get the sleep they need. Once you have set an appropriate bed time, stick to it — even on the weekend.
- **Establish a bedtime routine:** Follow the same routine every day: bath or shower, change into pyjamas, brush read or spend quiet time in their bedroom, lights out and go to sleep.

- **Help your child wind down:** Busy children need some time to relax. Consider playing soft music or reading to them.
- **Make sure the bedroom is suitable for sleep:** Ensure the bedroom is dark and quiet. If your child is anxious or afraid at night, use a night light.
- **Avoid stimulants:** Make sure your child avoids tea, coffee, chocolate and sports drinks, especially in the afternoon.
- **Turn off technology:** Try turning off computers, tablets and television one hour before bedtime to help your child sleep better.

Signs of sleep problems

If you establish good sleep habits and your child is still having trouble falling or staying asleep, they might have a [sleep problem](#). You might notice [behaviour problems](#), difficulty concentrating or they might seem tired during the day.

Signs of sleep problems include:

- [sleepwalking](#)
- [wetting the bed](#)
- [night terrors](#)
- [teeth grinding](#)
- [snoring](#)
- [trouble breathing while asleep](#), or taking long pauses between breaths

Whatever the cause, it is important to talk to your child about what is worrying them and decide on clear rules about a bedtime routine. Praising your child and reinforcing good behaviour will also help to improve bedtime difficulties. If you think your child may have a sleep problem, especially if they have trouble breathing while they sleep, talk to your [doctor](#).



FIND A HEALTH SERVICE — The [Service Finder](#) can help you find doctors, pharmacies, hospitals and other health services.

Resources and support

Visit the Royal Children's Hospital website for [strategies to improve night-time behaviour and deal with nighttime worries](#).

Visit Children's Health Queensland for more information about [how much sleep your child needs and good sleep habits](#).

For more information about sleep in children and adolescents, visit the [Sleep Health Foundation](#).

Visit the Pregnancy, Birth and Baby website for information and resources about [sleep for babies and young children](#).

Call Pregnancy, Birth and Baby to speak to a maternal child health nurse on [1800 882 436](#) or [video call](#). Available 7am to midnight (AET), 7 days a week (including public holidays).

Sources:

Tasmanian department of health ([Sleep tips for children](#)), Sleep Health foundation ([Sleep problems and sleep disorders in school ages children](#)), Royal Children's Hospital ([Bedtime problems](#)), Queensland Government ([Healthy sleep](#)).

Learn more here about the [development and quality assurance of healthdirect content](#).

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healthdirect

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