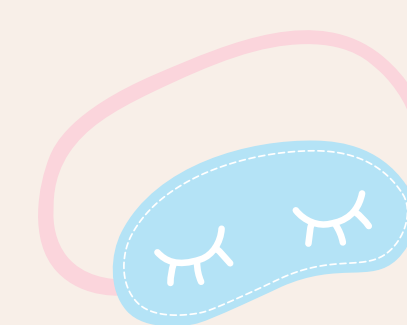
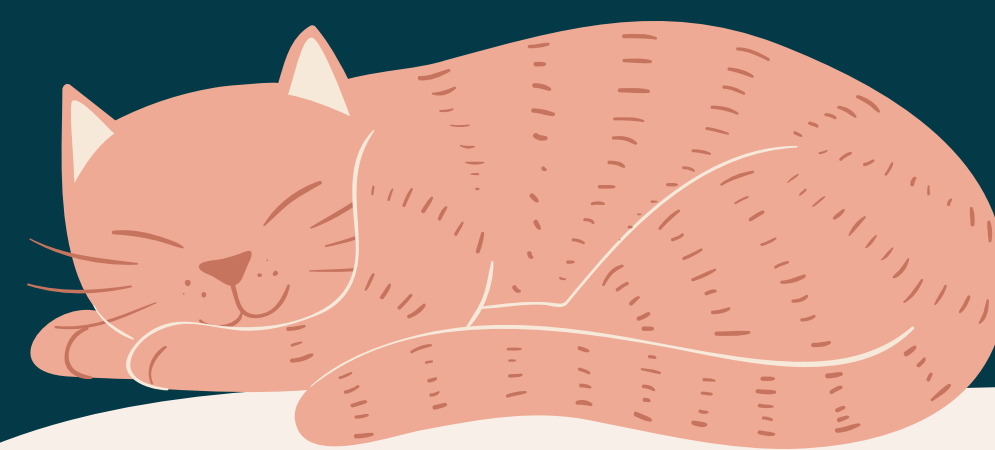


Sleep

in the Early Years







More helpful links:

[Bedwetting](#)
[Night terrors](#)
[Co-sleeping](#)
[Dummies](#)



Why is sleep important?

| | |
|--|--|
|  Boosts immunity_ and helps body to repair itself | During sleep, new cells grow, and existing cells are repaired, keeping us healthy, and our immune system strong. |
|  Improves memory | While we sleep our brains move short-term memories into long-term storage. This is especially important for young minds learning about the world. |
|  Assists learning | Healthy sleep helps children to function better during the day, allowing them to get more out of the activities they enjoy. It leads to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Longer periods of focus and engagement - Increased creativity - Increased problem-solving - Increased ability to filter out distractions |
|  Maintains physical and emotional health | After a good night's sleep, we usually feel happier, and more able to deal with the issues life throws at us. |
|  Promotes growth | Quality sleep leads to greatly improved bone and muscle development. |
|  Supports a healthy weight | It also balances production of the hormones, leptin and ghrelin, which help us to follow a healthy diet rather than craving more carbs. |

Trouble getting to sleep?

Do

Create a bedtime routine - For many children, a 30-60 minute bedtime routine can be a helpful way of signalling that 'play time' has transitioned into 'sleep time'. Routines should be consistent so children know what to expect.

Consider environment - A calm and restful bedroom environment is important when helping children get to sleep. Consider room temperature, noise and light, and whether the room is free from distractions and clutter.

Explore different strategies - There are many strategies available to support children who are anxious around bedtime and who struggle to settle by themselves. Techniques such as the 'Disappearing Chair' may be useful, but it's important to find what works for you and your child.

Don't

Consume caffeine - Caffeine can affect the time it takes to fall asleep, and the length and quality of sleep. It's best to avoid any products such as tea, hot chocolate, and chocolate biscuits before bedtime.

Use screens - Blue light from screens disrupts sleep by disrupting your child's sleep-wake cycle. Try and avoid the use of devices which emit bright light (such as televisions, tablets, and computers) at least an hour before bedtime. It's also important to remove devices from the bedroom if possible.

Exercise too close to bedtime - Daytime activity can help your child to burn off energy and feel tired at the end of the day. However, it also releases adrenaline and endorphins so try to avoid exercise in the two to three hours before bedtime.

Click on the [links](#) in the headings for more guidance on each of these areas.

Having disturbed sleep?

Do

Consider diet - The amount of food a child eats can affect sleep; eating a large meal before bedtime can prevent sleep but if a child is hungry or thirsty this can also cause them to wake. A light supper can often help. What they eat during the day can also impact sleep; avoid caffeine and anything sugary in the run up to bedtime.

Be a 'boring parent' - If your child wakes in the night, be as boring as possible to minimise excitement. Keep your voice calm, quiet and low, and leave lights off.

Consider toilet use - Encourage children to go to the toilet before they get into bed, and then again after story time. 'Double-voiding' their bladder may reduce the need to go to the toilet again during the night.

Don't

Make changes to the environment - Children are more likely to wake up if conditions have changed while they've been asleep, for example, the landing light has been turned off. Conditions should be consistent all the way through the night to reduce the chance of waking.

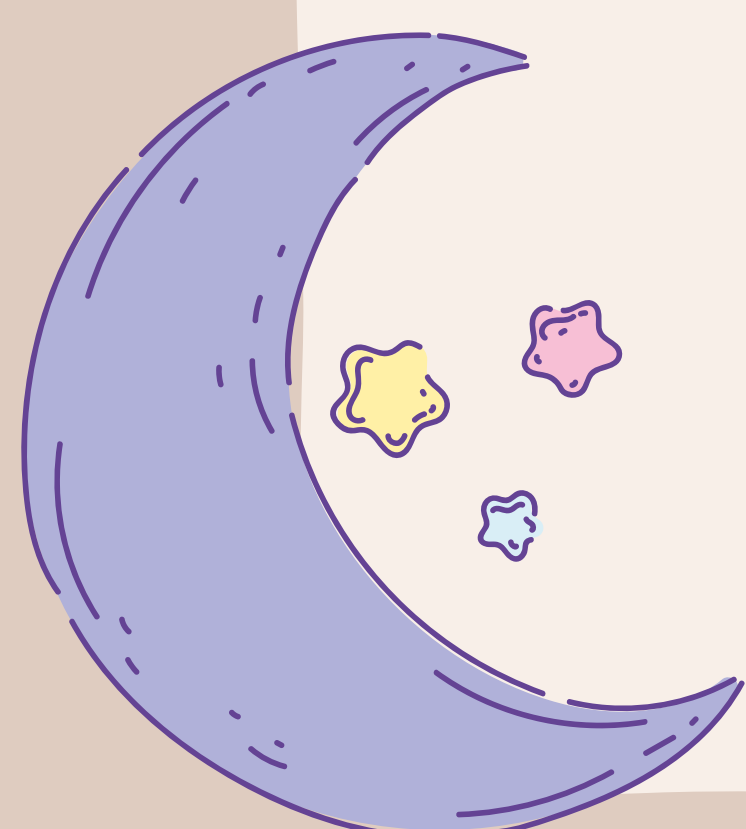
Leave naps too late - If your toddler is still napping, the timing and length of the nap can have a huge impact. Napping for even 20 minutes after 3pm will delay their natural melatonin (the sleepy hormone) release by up to an hour. Try making the nap earlier and shorter to see if that makes a difference.

Worry too much - Waking up in the night is part of a child's normal sleep pattern. However, if sleep issues are persistent and causing you or your child distress, seek help from a GP.

Click on the [links](#) in the headings for more guidance on each of these areas.

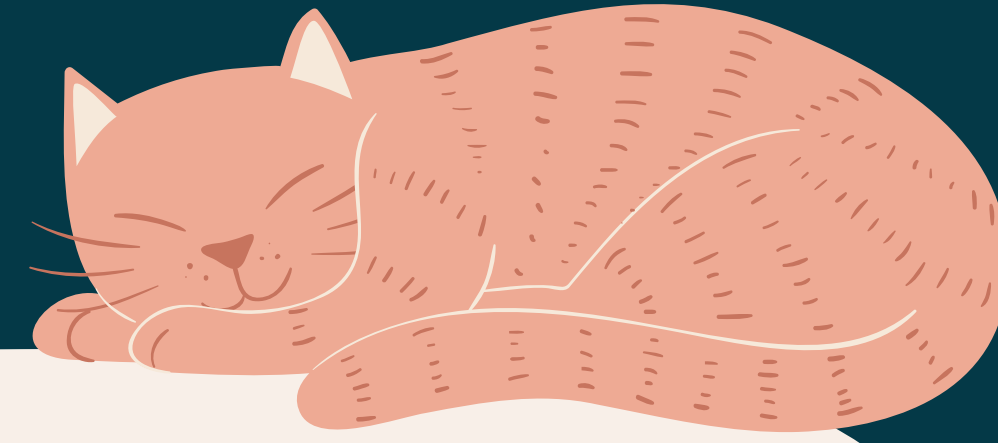
How much sleep should my child have?

| Age | Amount of sleep recommended per 24 hour period |
|---------------|--|
| 4 - 12 months | 12 - 16 hours (including naps) |
| 1 - 2 years | 11 - 14 hours (including naps) |
| 3 - 5 years | 10 - 13 hours (including naps) |



Sleep

in the Early Years



Bedtime routine: <https://sleepaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Toddler-sleep.pdf>

Bedwetting: <https://sleepaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Bedwetting.pdf>

Co-sleeping: <https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/co-sleeping/>

Diet: https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/TSC-Advice-Sheets_Diet-Sleep_Col.pdf

Dummies: <https://www.nct.org.uk/information/baby-toddler/caring-for-your-baby-or-toddler/dummies-pros-and-cons-your-dummy-questions-answered>

Environment: <https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/children/bedroom-environment/>

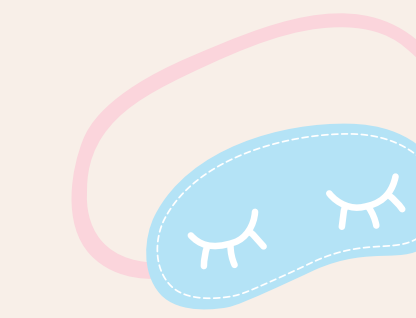
Environment: https://www.mwcds.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Sleep-Charity_Welcome-to-the-World-of-Sleep.pdf

Exercise: <https://www.togethertrust.org.uk/news/sleep-tips-exercise-and-daytime-activity>

Growth & health: <https://www.thesparklefoundation.org/the-crucial-role-of-sleep-in-growing-kids-health-and-development>

Immunity: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/physical-health/how-sleep-affects-immunity>

If you are accessing a paper copy of this sleep information, here is a list of the links to helpful websites that are embedded in the electronic version.



Learning: <https://huckleberrycare.com/blog/sleep-and-cognitive-development#sleepcognition1>

Memory: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/how-sleep-works/memory-and-sleep>

Naps: <https://huckleberrycare.com/blog/creating-a-successful-nap-time-routine-and-schedule-for-your-child>

Night terrors: <https://sleepaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Night-terrors.pdf>

Screens: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/children-and-sleep/how-blue-light-affects-kids-sleep>

Sleep patterns: <https://sleepaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Night-terrors.pdf>

Strategies: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/solutions-sleep-concerns-toddlers-1-3-years#helping-your-toddler-sleep-with-bedtime-fading>

Strategies: <https://huckleberrycare.com/blog/why-is-my-toddler-waking-at-night>

Toilet use: <https://eric.org.uk/advice-for-children-with-night-time-wetting/>

Weight: <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/family-resources-education/700childrens/2019/01/the-importance-of-sleep-in-managing-a-childs-weight>

