

Sleep hygiene

This guide is to explain what sleep hygiene is, and what supports good sleep hygiene. Some parents/carers may just want some advice on their child's sleep hygiene but others may like to try some of the tips themselves.

What is sleep hygiene?

- ▶ Strong sleep hygiene means having a bedroom environment and daily habits that promote sleep. Keeping a consistent sleep routine, creating a comfortable bedroom, winding down before bedtime, and building healthy habits during the day can all contribute to good sleep hygiene.



Why is sleep hygiene important?

Sleeping well is important for both physical and mental health, and therefore having good quality of life.



Sleeping well helps with brain function.

Everyone can benefit from better sleep, and sleep hygiene can play a key part in achieving that goal.

Have a sleep routine

- ▶ Following the same steps each night, including things like putting on pyjamas and brushing teeth, can support the brain in thinking that it is time for sleep.
- ▶ Use whatever puts you in a state of calm such as soft music, light stretching, reading, and/or relaxation exercises.
- ▶ Try to keep away from bright lights because they can delay the production of melatonin, a hormone that the body creates to enable sleep.
- ▶ Build in an hour before bedtime that is device-free. Mobile phones, tablets, and laptops cause brain stimulation that is hard to stop and they also generate blue light that may lower melatonin production.

Daily habits

- ▶ Light, especially sunlight, during the day can encourage good quality sleep.
- ▶ Exercising regularly can make it easier to sleep at night, as well as having other health benefits.
- ▶ Caffeine is a stimulant and can cause high energy levels even when someone wants to rest, so it is best avoided later in the day.
- ▶ Eating dinner late, especially if it is a big meal, can mean food is still digesting at bed time. This can disrupt sleep.

Bedroom environment

Light smells, such as lavender, may induce a calmer state of mind and help create a positive space for sleep.

Mattresses and pillows are important for comfortable sleep.

Heavy curtains or an eye mask will stop light from disturbing sleep.

Bedroom temperature should be cooler for the best sleep (between 60-67 degrees Fahrenheit or 15-19 degrees Celsius).



Although everyone is different and the amount of sleep they need will differ, the following guide may be helpful to see how much sleep is advised per age:

- ▶ 4 years old - 11 hours 30 minutes
- ▶ 5 years old - 11 hours
- ▶ 6 years old - 10 hours 45 minutes
- ▶ 7 years old - 10 hours 30 minutes
- ▶ 8 years old - 10 hours 15 minutes
- ▶ 9 years old - 10 hours
- ▶ 10 years old - 9 hours 45 minutes

- ▶ 11 years old - 9 hours 30 minutes
- ▶ 12 years - 9 hours 15 minutes minimum
- ▶ 13 years old - 9 hours 15 minutes minimum
- ▶ 14 years old - 9 hours minimum
- ▶ 15 years old - 9 hours minimum
- ▶ 16 years old - 9 hours minimum

General tips

To shift sleep times, do not try to do it all in one go because this can do more damage. Instead, make small, step-by-step alterations of up to an hour so that a new routine can be settled into.

A warm (not hot) bath can help with relaxation and getting ready for sleep.



Naps can be a good way to recover energy during the day, but they can disrupt sleep at night. Try to keep naps relatively short and limited to the early afternoon to continue good sleep at night.

Tips for children and teenagers

- ▶ Tablets, smartphones, TVs and other electronic devices can have a negative impact on children getting to sleep. Older children may also stay up late or wake up in the night to use social media. Try to keep your child's bedroom screen-free and ask them to charge their devices in another room. Encourage your child to stop using screens at least an hour before bedtime.
- ▶ Suggest that teenagers drink less caffeine, which is found in drinks such as coke, tea and coffee, especially 4 hours before bed. Too much caffeine can keep them awake and reduce the amount of deep sleep they have.
- ▶ Talk to your child about anything they are worried about. This will help them to sort out any problems and sleep better. You could also encourage them to write down their worries or make a to-do list before they go to bed, which aims to make them less likely to lie awake worrying during the night.

Bibliography

- ▶ <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/sleep-hygiene>
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