

Bedtime Routines

Guidance on how and why to build a good bedtime routine



About



Routines are important as they help build structure and predictability into our lives which can help to reduce anxiety. Routines are important for adults as well as children.

Routines are particularly important for children with additional needs and communication difficulties as they help them understand what they are doing and provide a reference of time.



Exposure to daylight and routines are also key in helping our body understand what time of day it is. Routines such as mealtimes, and set tasks such as brushing our teeth and putting on our pyjamas give our body signals which help it prepare for sleep.

Having a routine therefore helps us to anticipate going to bed and prepare for going to sleep.

Without a bedtime routine, some children can struggle to understand why they need to finish their activity which can make the transition to bed more difficult.

Sometimes a child may have a very long and complicated bedtime routine, which can take over the whole evening which can make it more difficult to settle to sleep.



Top Tip Toolkit

Routines should always be logical. Getting ready for bed should always be followed by going directly to bed. The bedtime routine should last no more than one hour.

First plan the different elements of your child's routine:

Start by turning off devices to gain your 'golden hour screen-free time'. See the guidance sheet on Lighting and Devices

Introduce a supper time. This can limit delays to the bedtime routine due to hunger. See the Guidance sheet on Food and Drink

Use the bathroom before bed. Having a bath or shower before bed can help your child relax and help regulate body temperature. Carry out bedtime tasks such as tooth brushing. Don't forget to encourage your child to use the toilet before bed

Change into bedtime clothes. Change into comfy clothes after school, as wearing pyjamas at this time can confuse the bedtime routine

When your child is in bed, you can choose a relaxing activity to suit your child's age and development. This may include a song, a story or independent reading. Remember to limit this activity to a maximum of 15 minutes.

This information aims to broaden understanding of factors impacting on sleep, offering general tips as a framework for families. It is not intended as a substitute for medical advice or parental preference or responsibility.

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Bedtime Routines



An example of a bedtime routine for an infant school-age child

5:00 pm evening meal

- Free time/activity
- Devices turned off and put to charge

7:00 pm supper time

7.15 pm upstairs

Bathroom

- undress
- toilet
- bath
- toilet
- dry
- Pjs
- brush teeth

Bedroom

- bed
- story
- light off, "time to sleep"

So, if you leave the room by 7:45 pm and the child is asleep by 8:00 pm and they wake up at 7:00 am, this gives them 11 hours sleep!

An example of a bedtime routine for a secondary school-age child

5:00 pm evening meal

- Free time/activity
- Devices turned off and put to charge

9:00 pm supper time

9.15 pm upstairs

Bathroom

- undress
- toilet
- bath
- toilet
- dry
- Pjs
- brush teeth

Bedroom

- bed
- Reading/relaxation time
- light off, "time to sleep"

So if the young person falls to asleep by 10:00 pm and they wake up at 7:00 am, this gives them 9 hours sleep!