

Light and Devices



Guidance on light and devices - Does it make a difference?

About

Light has a significant impact on our sleep. This is because of the way our brain works.

The part of our brain that we call the body clock (suprachiasmatic nucleus) is responsible for the release of hormones that regulate our sleep-wake cycle, amongst other things.

Our body clock is influenced by the environment, particularly light. When our eyes detect darkness they send messages back to the brain to tell us to prepare for sleep. When our eyes detect light, this makes us feel more awake and can make it harder to fall asleep.

Normal household lighting can delay sleep, but the light from devices can be particularly alerting because they contain blue light. Devices also have a stimulating effect on the brain which can make it more difficult to wind down at night and go to sleep.

Did you know?

Humans sleep at night and are awake during the day this is called diurnal. Some animals are nocturnal which means they are awake at night and sleep in the day and others, like cats, are crepuscular, meaning they are active at dusk and dawn.

Top Tips Tool Kit

Reduce lighting around an hour before bed. This helps send signals to the brain that it is time to wind down. It also provides a social cue that bedtime is approaching which is important for some children with additional needs or social communication difficulties.

Aim for an hour of screen-free time before bed.

Have a set charging point for portable electronic devices. Ideally, this would be out of the bedroom to avoid temptation.

Use a regular alarm clock in the bedroom rather than a mobile phone.

If your child or young person prefers some light in their bedroom at night, ensure this is below reading level and a warm time such as red, yellow or wark white.

Use blackout curtains and/or blinds on bedroom windows.

Exposure to light in the morning wakes our brain up and lets us know it's morning. This resets our body clock ready for another cycle. This helps with settling to sleep again at bedtime.

