

# Making Life Easier with Tips for Bedtime

## Tip #1: Establish Good Sleep Habits

- ✓ Set a regular bedtime, naptime and time to wake up. Young children need 10-12 hours of sleep daily including naps.
- ✓ Make time for physical activity and time to play outside. This play should not be within an hour of naptime or bedtime.
- ✓ Give your child your undivided, unrushed attention while you are getting him ready for bed or a nap. Let him know how important this time is for both of you.
- ✓ Develop calm, relaxing routines. Young children do better with predictability and they learn from repetition.
- ✓ Tell your child about each step in the routine. This will help her understand and know what will happen next. “Jada, it’s time to take a nap. First, let’s find your blanket. Then we can snuggle.”
- ✓ Tell your child what might happen when he wakes up. Talk to her or show her pictures. “First, you take a nap. Then when you wake up, we will go to the park.”
- ✓ Let your child take a favorite object to bed. This helps with the transition. A teddy bear, doll, blanket or book can help your child understand that it is bedtime.
- ✓ Avoid rough housing, tickling, computer games, DVDs before bedtime. Instead, provide calming activities and sounds such as reading a story or listening to soft music.
- ✓ Put your child down to sleep while he is still awake. Say “good night” and leave the room so he will learn to go to sleep on his own.
- ✓ Avoid certain foods and drinks six hours before sleep. Anything sugary, caffeinated or fatty can keep a child awake.
- ✓ Try breast feeding or a warm bottle before bed. Milk can help induce deep sleep. But, if your child is being potty-trained, avoid it three hours before bedtime.
- ✓ Provide choices if possible. Choices can really help prevent challenging behaviors. Ask your child which toy or story he wants or if she wants a night light on or off.
- ✓ Reduce noise and distractions nearby. The quieter the better in and near your child’s room.
- ✓ Reduce light. A dark room is best, but a night light or hallway light is okay if your child wants some light on.
- ✓ Make sure your child is comfortable. Make sure he is not too cold or too warm. Turn on a fan. Or add an extra blanket.



## Tip #2: Keep a Sleep Diary for a Week

Keep a written log of what time your child falls asleep and wakes up each day.

Also record the total number of hours your child sleeps each day. This can help you see if there are patterns or issues with consistency around bedtime.



## Tip #3: Look for Signs of Sleepiness

Learn the signs when your child is getting tired (rubbing eyes, yawning, getting grumpy). Share this information with others who help put your child to sleep.

## Tip #4: Talk with Your Child About Fears

For a young child, there really are monsters under the bed (and in the closet)! In the dark, shadows of toys or furniture can be frightening, but your child may not be able to tell you that she is scared. If your child expresses fear, let her know that you understand and then provide comfort. A soft toy can help, too!

## Tip #5: Celebrate Little Successes!

Congratulate your child: “You’re such a big girl, sleeping in your own bed with your teddy bear!”

Remember, restful sleep for your child also means rest for the rest of the family, so everyone will be ready for shared days of family fun and learning.

*Adapted from Making Life Easier Tip Sheet series developed by The Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI), a federally funded center that translates extensive research into everyday practice to improve the social-emotional outcomes for children with, or at risk for, delays and disabilities. Learn more at [www.challengingbehavior.org](http://www.challengingbehavior.org).*