How to Help Your Child Sleep
With a Comforting Bedtime Routine

Having a bedtime routine can mean more, better sleep for your child...and for you.

WHY BEDTIME ROUTINES MATTER

A comforting bedtime routine helps send children of all ages off to sleep feeling safe and calm. Following a routine makes a good night’s sleep more likely and helps you make sure your child gets the rest they need to thrive. It’s even more important when other parts of the day are uncertain—bedtime can be a routine that children can look forward to.

TIPS FOR BEDTIME ROUTINES

Here are some tips to help you find a routine that works for you and your child.

1. **Start with setting the time for bed and stick to it each night.**
The time you choose will depend on your child’s age and what time they have to wake up for school the next day. Having a regular bedtime lets your child know when it’s time to wind down. See the next page for how much sleep your child needs.

2. **Start your routine 30 to 45 minutes before bedtime.**
If bedtime is at 8:30 p.m., start your routine at 8:00 p.m. at the latest.

3. **Plan a routine you can keep each night.**
Choose activities that are easy for you to follow, in the same order, starting at the same time. See the text box at right for ideas about what to include in your routine.

4. **Talk with your teenagers**
about what works best for them and then help them stick to it. Even older teens do best when their caregivers help them set a bedtime and a routine that includes limits on screen time.

5. **Getting up at about the same time each day helps**, too. Teens usually stay up later and want to sleep later—this is normal. But having a consistent schedule is important.

Sleep is one of the basics children need to help them grow physically, cognitively, and emotionally. Getting a good night’s sleep helps children do better in school. And a good night starts with a comforting bedtime routine. Pajama Program’s mission is to promote and support a comforting bedtime routine for all children to help them thrive. **After all, good nights are good days.**
**How Much Sleep Do Children Need?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>4 to 12 months</th>
<th>1 to 2 years</th>
<th>3 to 5 years</th>
<th>6 to 12 years</th>
<th>13 to 18 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommended hours</td>
<td>12 to 16 hours (including naps)</td>
<td>11 to 14 hours</td>
<td>10 to 13 hours</td>
<td>9 to 12 hours</td>
<td>8 to 10 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommendations from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, 2016.  
Note: there is no consensus on sleep recommendations for infants from birth to 3 months of age.

**DID YOU KNOW...**

Starting in preschool, many children aren’t getting the sleep they need to thrive. Teenagers are really missing out: between half and three-quarters of youth in middle and high school are getting far less sleep than they need. In fact, high-school students get the equivalent of four nights’ sleep during the five-day school week.

Children and youth who do not get enough sleep are more likely to have health problems, including obesity, diabetes, poor mental health, and injuries. They may have trouble concentrating, solving problems, and learning. Sometimes they have problems with their behavior. All of these challenges can mean not doing well in school.

Just 30 minutes’ more sleep each night makes a difference. A comforting bedtime routine can add that extra 30 minutes by helping children fall asleep more easily and sleep more soundly. And **when children have a good night, their caregivers can, too.**

**Bedtime routines are important for children (and adults) of all ages,** everywhere. Routines are most important when children face uncertainty because of changes in or problems with health, housing, school, family, community, or anything that makes their lives unpredictable. Uncertainty can make it hard to follow a routine every night, but that is when it is most important.

**All children need a good night’s sleep to wake up ready for a new day.** How much sleep your child needs each night changes as they grow. See the chart above for more information.

Sleep disorders are some of the most common health problems among children. If you are concerned about your child’s sleep, talk to your healthcare provider.

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*Pajama Program is a 4-star Charity Navigator charity in an elite class of 2% of nonprofits with the highest ranking for nine consecutive years, and meets the Better Business Bureau’s 20 Charity Standards, the highest ranking.*