

Keep Active

To stay healthy, improve health, and aid a good nights sleep children need to do three types of physical activity each week. Exercise also strengthens bones and muscles. These include:

- walking to school
- playing in the playground - jumping and climbing activities, combined with the use of playground equipment and toys, games such as hopscotch and skipping with a rope
- riding a scooter
- skateboarding
- rollerblading
- walking the dog

Relaxation

Winding down is a critical stage in preparing your child for bed. There are many ways for them to relax:

- A warm (not hot) bath will help their body to reach a temperature where it's most likely to rest.
- Story time – this is an opportunity for your child to relax and spend some quality time with you. Reading a book or listening to the radio will also relax their mind by distracting it from any worries or anxieties.

Avoid screens in the bedroom

The bedroom should be a relaxed environment.

The light from screens can affect how easily children get to sleep. Try to keep your child's bedroom a screen-free zone (Tablet, computers, mobiles/smartphones, TVs and other electronic gadgets) and get them to charge their phones and other devices downstairs. That way they won't be tempted to respond to friends getting in touch late in the evening.

A cosy Bedroom

It's important to create an environment that's favourable for sleep, for younger children "Keep the bedroom just for sleeping."

The bedroom needs to be dark (Blackout blinds are a good investment), quiet and tidy. It should smell fresh and be kept at a temperature of 18-24C.

Avoid Food just before bedtime

Eating too much or too little close to bedtime may prevent sleep, due to an overfull or empty stomach. This can be a cause of discomfort throughout the night. Ensure children's

last meal is at least 2 hours before bedtime. Caffeine is a stimulant so try to avoid giving drinks containing it and avoid fizzy drinks as they will bloat their tummy leading to discomfort! It's important to keep drinking though, especially water. It encourages the passage of waste through the digestive system and helps soften poo.

Sleep at regular times

Keeping to regular sleeping hours programmes the brain and internal body clock to get used to a set routine.

Most children need between nine and twelve hours of sleep every night. By working out what time you'll need to wake them up, you can set a regular bedtime schedule.

Below is a guide to how much sleep children need:

- 4 years** - night time: 11 hours, 30 minutes
- 5 years** - night time: 11 hours
- 6 years** - night time: 10 hours, 45 minutes
- 7 years** - night time: 10 hours, 30 minutes
- 8 years** - night time: 10 hours, 15 minutes
- 9 years** - night time: 10 hours
- 10 years** - night time: 9 hours, 45 minutes
- 11 years** - night time: 9 hours, 30 minutes
- 12 years** - night time: 9 hours, 15 minutes
- 13 years** - night time: 9 hours, 15 minutes
- 14 years** - night time: 9 hours
- 15 years** - night time: 9 hours
- 16 years** - night time: 9 hours