

How to help if your child is experiencing problems sleeping



How much sleep does a child need?

All children are different, but generally each night:

- Children aged 3-5 need 11-12 hours
- Children aged 6-11 need 10-11 hours
- Teenagers need 9-10 hours.

Why do children experience sleep problems?

There can be different reasons:

- Bedtime fears - many young children are afraid of the dark or being left alone.
- Bad habits - such as napping too much during the day, eating a poor diet, use of electronic devices before bedtime or substance abuse.
- Anxiety, low mood or depression
- A chemical imbalance in the brain.
- Nightmares, sleepwalking, night terrors or insomnia.

How you can support your child

1. Make sure your child is comfortable. Not too hot, not too cold. Make sure the room is not too noisy or bright.
2. Establish a good bedtime routine. For example a warm drink, a warm bath, bedtime story and say goodnight. Aim to get up and go to bed at the same time every day.
3. Encourage your child to do some exercise particularly late afternoon or early evening, but not late in the evening to avoid over-stimulation.
4. Help your child to relax before bed - reading a book, listening to music.
5. If something is troubling your child when it's time to sleep, suggest writing it down or drawing a picture of the thoughts.
6. If struggling to fall asleep, help your child to imagine being in a relaxing place, feeling happy and slowly breathing in and out.

Things to consider:

1. Avoid going without sleep for a long period of time.
2. Encourage your child not to have too much caffeine or sugar in his/her diet.
3. Encourage your family to have supper early in the evening rather than late.
4. Don't allow your child to lie in for too long. After a bad night, don't let your child sleep in the next day, this will just make it harder to get to sleep the following night.
5. Don't allow your child to play computer games or overuse phones and other devices close to bedtime. Screen time may help with boredom, but it can make it harder to get to sleep as the mind is stimulated. Stop a couple of hours before it's time to sleep.
6. Monitor your child's general online activity - including the types of games he/she is playing online and social media use.

If your child is still giving you cause for concern, you may wish to discuss with your school or your GP.
Or, visit www.liverpoolcamhs.com/need-advice