

WEEK FOR BETTER SLEEP SEMAINE POUR MIEUX DORMIR

Preschoolers Tips Summary

Create a good environment for sleep. Make your child's room dark, quiet, and cool during the night.



Routine family evening activities are important because they help create a feeling of security in children and are a nice transition to the bedtime routine!



Prepare your child's mind and body for sleep. Use a relaxing bedtime routine.



Let in the light. Start your day with bright light.



The transition to stopping naps is different for every child! The important thing is that your child gets enough sleep and respects their natural need for sleep.



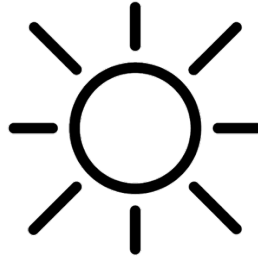
Exercise your child's superpowers. Keep your child active during the day.



Maintain a stable sleep schedule. Waking up at the same time every day can help maintain a healthy sleep schedule and make it easier to get going in the morning.

Your whole day matters

Day 1 Sleep Tip For Your Child: Let in the light



Start your child's day with bright light.

Good morning, sunshine! Try to get your child exposed to some sunlight or other bright light every morning to set a clear day to night pattern, which is important for healthy sleep development.

Open your child's curtains when they first wake up to let in the light. For the most impact, get outside with your child early in the day. In the afternoon, try to go outside for a short walk. During the daytime, encourage play and activities near windows or outside.

Bonus tip for children with neuro-developmental disorders (NDD):
The most important factor in setting our body clock is light. This is extra helpful for children with a NDD who may not pick up on other cues to recognize day and nighttime schedules.

Day 2 Sleep Tip For Your Child: Exercise your child's superpowers!



Keep your child active during the day.

Daytime is play time! According to the [movement guidelines for Canadians](#), your preschooler needs 3 hours of active play each day, of which 1 hour should be energetic play. Ideally, there would be both periods of active play and quiet activities through the day. Avoid active or stimulating play before bed.

Look for simple ways to incorporate physical activity into your child's daily life. Try going to a nearby playground, or for a walk or bike around the neighborhood. If your child loves a sport, see if the community offers programs. Physical activity can also happen at home by having active toys or throwing dance parties.

Bonus tip for children with neuro-developmental disorders: Depending on your child, you may need to look at ways of mixing active play and quiet times into your day.

Day 3 Sleep Tip For Your Child: Maintain a stable sleep schedule



Waking up at the same time every day can help maintain a healthy sleep schedule and make it easier to get going in the morning.

Consistency in bedtime and wake-up time, even on weekends, is crucial for toddlers! If your child wakes up too late on weekend mornings, it will be difficult for them to fall asleep at the desired time on Sunday evening... Try to limit the difference between the weekday and weekend schedule to 60 minutes when possible.

A good sleep schedule is one that is adapted to the natural needs of your child and can therefore be different from one child to another. Two children of the same age could go to bed 1 hour apart if one is a short sleeper and the other a long sleeper. Or... an older child could go to bed earlier than a younger child because their need for sleep is greater or because the younger child is still taking naps. The important thing is to listen to everyone's needs and maintain consistency!

Also encourage your child to eat and drink at regular times during the day to sleep well at night. Feeding times are helpful to set the body clock of our little ones. Avoid sugary, salty, or fatty foods, especially a few hours before bed. Foods and drinks containing caffeine (like chocolate or soda) or added sugar are not recommended before 2 years of age. Older kids should avoid caffeinated foods and drinks for at least 6 hours before bedtime.

Day 4 Sleep Tip For Your Child: To nap or not to nap?



The transition to stopping naps is different for every child! The important thing is that your child gets enough sleep and respects their natural need for sleep.

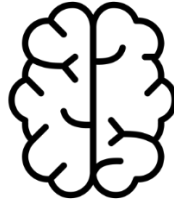
Before the age of 2, almost all children take at least one nap during the day. Between ages 3 and 4, your child needs 10-13 hours of sleep per day. From 3 to 5 years old, children gradually stop napping at their own pace. At 5 years old, the vast majority of them no longer need to nap.

When sleep at night becomes disrupted by frequent awakenings, when your child takes longer and longer to fall asleep in the evening or when they get up several times at bedtime, this can sometimes be a sign that nap time is too much! This transition is not an all or nothing affair! The need for a nap can gradually disappear, it can be felt on some days and not on others... just listen to your child's needs.

If you think your child is transitioning, you can gradually reduce their nap time and observe how they respond to this change. Are bedtime conflicts decreasing? Do the time it takes to fall asleep and the nighttime awakenings also decrease? These are helpful clues to observe.

The important thing is to listen to your child's signals of fatigue and adapt accordingly! Some children may give up their nap early or keep their nap for longer. Still make sure you have quiet 'down times' during the day if they are not napping.

Day 5 Sleep Tip For Your Child: Prepare your child's mind and body for sleep



Use a relaxing bedtime routine.

Try to make the period before bedtime a happy, calm time. For an hour or two before bed, help your child avoid excitement from games, light from the TV or electronic devices, and fights over settling to sleep. Also avoid activities that are noisy, stressful or that could cause conflicts (e.g.: tidying up).

You know your child best. For some kids a bath is relaxing and a great activity for the bedtime routine. For others it is exciting and stimulating, and for others it's something they hate. For these children, bath time is better avoided during the bedtime routine. Choose activities your child finds calming and do these for a short time each night before bed such as reading, singing and cuddling together.

Involve your child in building their bedtime routine, for example by using pictograms of the different stages (e.g., putting on their pajamas, brushing their teeth and reading a story). This will give them a sense of control as they prepare for the night.

Day 6 Sleep Tip For Your Child:

Routine is your friend



Routine family evening activities are important because they help create a feeling of security in children and are a nice transition to the bedtime routine!

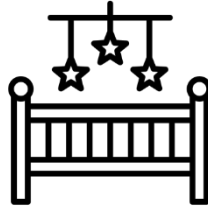
A good bedtime routine is the key ingredient for quality sleep for children and a pleasant evening for everyone! Try to start your preschooler's bedtime routine at the same time every night and keep the order of the routine the same as well. A successful bedtime routine is short (maximum 15 to 20 min), is the same every evening and is interchangeable (everyone can do it with the child... even grandparents or a babysitter). Having a short, simple and effective bedtime routine allows children to calm down and gradually reduce their activities before going to bed.

Talking through the bedtime routine as you do it can be very soothing. Sometimes giving your child an item that makes them feel safe and relaxed in bed such as a teddy bear, other soft toy, comfort blanket, or even a parent's old T-shirt (preferably not washed!) can be helpful. Using a bedtime phrase as you leave your child to settle can also help them know it's time to go to sleep. The best routine is the one that ends with a hug and doesn't stretch!

Bonus tip for children with neuro-developmental disorders:

It can be more difficult for your child to move between activities and to recognize when they are tired or that it is bedtime. Using a visual timetable can help them understand and move through the stages to get to bed more calmly and feel ready to sleep.

Day 7 Sleep Tip For Your Child: Create a good environment for sleep



Make your child's room dark, quiet, and cool during the night.

Bed is for sleeping! Make sure your child's room it is dark, quiet, and cool (about 18 degrees). If they need a night light, choose a dim yellow or orange light. If the room is noisy, consider a white noise machine or a fan, and ideally leave the noise on all night.

Make sure the texture of your child's bedding or pajamas are comfortable and think of other sensory considerations that may be disturbing or helpful to them.

Avoid using things to settle your child that will not still be there when they wake naturally in the night, as this can make it hard for your child to fall asleep again. Avoid rocking or cuddling them as they fall asleep.

Thank you for joining *Week for Better Sleep!*

For additional resources visit our website at
researchsleep.ca