

Learn empirically-based behavioral recommendations to improve your child's sleep.



# Sleep Better Guide

for School-Aged Children 6-12



8 recommendations to improve sleep:

## 1. Avoid screen time 1 hour before bed.

Watching TV or playing on a laptop, video game, tablet or phone can make it more difficult to sleep. Using technology tricks our bodies into feeling activated, and the light from these devices suppress the hormone in our body (melatonin) that makes us feel sleepy. Children and adults should avoid watching TV, playing video games, working on the computer or playing on their phones 1 hour before bedtime.

## 2. Follow a bedtime routine.

Following a 20- to 30-minute bedtime routine every night will help your child fall asleep. The routine should include calm activities, such as reading a book or talking about the day, with the last part occurring in the room where your child sleeps. Completing the same bedtime routine every night will train your child's body to fall asleep quickly.

## 3. Make the bedroom comfortable.

Your child's bedroom should be comfortable, quiet and dark. A nightlight is fine. Your child will sleep better in a room that is cool (less than 75° F). Using ear plugs can be helpful if the house is noisy. Most importantly, your child should not do anything in bed other than sleep. When your child reads, plays video games or does homework in their bed, it trains their body to associate the bed with being awake. Avoid using your child's bed for time out or other punishment. You want your child to think of the bedroom as a good place, not a bad one.

## 4. Cut out caffeine.

Caffeine is a stimulant that makes the body feel aroused and awake. Caffeine can stay in the body's system for up to 8-12 hours! Your child should avoid any sort of caffeine. Caffeine can be found in many types of soda, coffee, iced tea and chocolate.

## 5. Engage in calming evening activities.

The hour before bed should be a quiet time. Your child should not get involved in high-energy activities, such as rough play or playing outside, or stimulating activities, such as computer games.

## 6. Keep technology out of the bedroom.

New research shows that the biggest contributors to pediatric sleep problems are technology-related. Keep technology devices, including televisions, phones, computer tablets, laptops and video games out of your child's bedroom. Children can easily develop the bad habit of "needing" the television to fall asleep. It is also much more difficult to control your child's television viewing if the set is in their bedroom.

## 7. Keep a consistent sleep schedule.

Going to bed and waking up at different times confuses our body's internal clock, which cues us to fall asleep. Keeping a consistent schedule every day of the week (including weekends) will help your child fall asleep faster, stay asleep throughout the night and wake up with greater ease.

## 8. Schedule 10-11 hours for sleep.

Sleep is essential to children's learning, growth and brain development. Many cognitive processes are dependent on adequate sleep opportunity. Pediatricians and Sleep Physicians recommend that children ages 6-12 years obtain between 10 and 11 hours of sleep every night.

