

Helping Children Sleep During COVID-19

A guide to help children settle at bedtime for a restful nights sleep



A daily routine is key

Children are creatures of routine and thrive when they know what time to go to bed and what their routine consists of. A consistent routine will help reduce many anxieties displayed at bedtime.



A calm bedroom

A child's bedroom needs to be a relaxing environment at bedtime, with toys put away where possible so they are not becoming overstimulated. Limiting light in the room will help sleep, as our bodies need darkness to send us to sleep. If your child is happy in the dark, avoid any lights at all. If they need a light to feel safe try to keep it to a small night light or hall light. There are many projectors that are calming, such as star constellations and rainbows that provide light and something relaxing to look at. Monitor the temperature of their room, feeling too hot or too cold can cause restlessness.

Avoiding screens at bedtime

The blue light behind all tablets, TVs and laptop screens, tricks our brain into thinking it's daylight and can actually keep us awake. Avoid scary programmes, including the news that may add to your child's fears. Try getting your child to do some quiet reading or listen to a story or audio-book. Listening to nature sounds or calm quiet music with no lyrics may help them drift off. There are many free apps available.



Waking up in the night

If your child wakes up during the night and can't go back to sleep because they are worried, go and reassure them that they are safe. If they leave their room and come into yours, take them back and put them back into bed. Tell them again that they are safe. It can be incredibly challenging for parents when our children are not settling, it is important to remember to try to stay calm ourselves as challenging as that may be. Children mirror our behaviour. If we are calm, it we help them be calm and relaxed and have a peaceful night sleep.

Get them moving

Physical exercise is vital for good mental health. Being physically tired can also help children drift off for a good nights sleep. Make the most of your daily exercise by taking the dog for a run or finding other fun ways to expel some energy. Yoga can also be helpful for calming your body down and getting ready for rest at night. Try getting your child to lay down on their back with their legs perpendicular up against a wall. Have them put their arms out to their sides and encourage them to do some deep breathing as they lay like this. If it's possible, have them do this pose in their bed, so it's easier to transition them to laying in bed for sleep.



Try a transitional object

If your child struggles to separate from you, try a transitional object such as a teddy or an item of your clothing. This is a special item that helps your child feel comforted. It helps them feel like part of you is still present even when you're not there.



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation is a systematic way of tensing and relaxing all of the muscles in the body. Ask your child to lie on their bed with their eyes closed and tense and relax each muscle in the body one after the other, starting at the top of their body and going all the way down. Some children find it helps to do these muscle exercises whilst thinking about their favorite relaxing place.