

A bedtime routine is important in getting a good night's sleep. A routine helps to support children's body clocks and aid relaxation. Consistency is key - sometimes sleep patterns may get worse before they get better. It is not uncommon to think that a new routine isn't working but it's important to stick to it for at least two weeks in order to see results.

## Deciding the details of the routine

Decide **who** will carry out the routine, or will you take turns if you have a partner?

What **time** do you want your child in bed? Decide this first and then plan the routine from here.

**Where** will you display the routine in your house? It should be somewhere accessible for all to see, for example, the fridge door. You could use this [Editable Bedtime Checklist](#).

**Who will need to know** about the routine and follow it? This could include babysitters, grandparents, non-resident parents and more. If other people put your child to bed, it is essential that they follow the same routine.

**What time is it acceptable to start the day?** Anything before this agreed time should be treated as a night waking and not the start of the day.

Does your child find **bath time** relaxing? If not, you may wish to bathe them in the morning.

## Tips for a successful new routine

- Bath time should be carried out 30 minutes before you want your child to sleep. The fall in body temperature following a bath may help them to fall asleep more easily.
- Plan quiet time in the hour before your child goes to bed. Activities may include hand-eye coordination activities, such as jigsaws, threading and colouring in. You could use these resources to create a family Bedtime Box as part of your new routine.
- Once your child has gone to their room they should not go back to the living room.
- No television, computer games or screen activities should be accessed in the hour before bedtime.
- Avoid giving your child blackcurrant drinks, chocolate, cola, tea or coffee in the evening.
- Keep hugs, kisses and stories the same length each night.

## Putting the new routine into action

It is important to set a routine which will work for your family. Decide what time you want your child to be in bed, then work backwards. The routine should start an hour before your child goes to sleep.

Here's an example of what your new routine may look like:

**7.00pm**

Dim lights, turn off all screen activity.

**7.05pm**

Calming activity using your child's interest. Hand-eye coordination activities are good, for example, colouring/drawing/cutting and sticking/jigsaws/bricks. You could use a Bedtime Box here.

**7.15pm**

Supper time with sleepy foods.

**7.30pm**

Upstairs for bath time (if this is appropriate), or alternatively massage/mindfulness activities. You could put your child's pyjamas on the radiator if they're not having a bath.

**8.00pm**

Give hugs and kisses - keep these to the same length each night and say 'It's sleep time.'. If your child gets up, follow the steps for either gradual retreat/rapid return depending on the strategy you are using.

Stay calm.

No eye contact and no conversation.

Only use set phrases, for example, 'It's sleep time.'.

## Have you made a family Bedtime Box yet?

Create a restful, screen-free activity box to promote good sleep. Add this list to your bedtime box for ideas of 'sleepy foods'.

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