

# Your Child and Sleep

*During these challenging times, adults and children have experienced changes to their normal sleeping routines and habits. We are probably all experiencing higher levels of stress and the hormone produced when we feel like this (cortisol) affects our normal sleep-wake cycles. We have also all found ourselves out of our normal daily routines (e.g. work, school, clubs, socialising) which then affects our sleep routines. There are things you can do to help your family improve their sleep.*

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY CHILD GET TO SLEEP?

### 1 *Get back into a routine*

Keep to the same wake up time and bedtime that your child would normally have during the week, weekends, and during holidays. This helps your child's body to produce the right signals to know it's time to sleep. Try to chunk the day to help them see that there is still a routine. You could put this on the fridge!

### 2 *Get exercise and daylight*

Getting outside and using energy will help your child to feel tired at night – this might be something most children are doing less throughout the day than they normally would in school. Doing this in the morning is even better for our bodies. Getting children to say what they can see, smell or hear can help any worries.

### 3 *Make a 'good sleep' bedroom*

Even if a bedroom is used for play and fun during the day, think about how it looks and feels at night. It should be quiet, calm and dark (night lights are fine). Is it possible to hide or remove TVs or game consoles? Can toys be put away? Did you know a bedroom should be 16-18 degrees? Not too warm, not too cold!

### 4 *Wind down for sleep*



Use the hour before bedtime to get ready for sleep. Try moving to a different part of the house (e.g. away from the TV/games), listen to music, do colouring, have a bath, dim the lights. This also means putting phones away! The blue light from screens significantly reduces the sleep hormone in bodies (melatonin).

### 5 *Relax*

Try to keep any talk about worries to earlier in the day – dinner time can be a good chance to talk. There are lots of videos you can use on YouTube to try out relaxing movement such as stretching, breathing, or kid-friendly meditation. Apps such as Calm and Headspace have resources for children. If your child is struggling to stay in bed, try things like hugging their pillow and saying it is full of your love, or having a cuddly toy you both hug before bed as part of a routine.

## WHAT ABOUT ADULTS?

- Get out for exercise and fresh air with your family.
- Put the day to rest – make a to-do list, worry list, or just note down thoughts to help you relax.
- Put your phone and other screens away for at least 1 hour before bed. Reading, listening to music or audio books, and puzzles are all good alternatives.
- Relax your body and mind – try some gentle stretching (not intense exercise), breathing or meditations.
- If you can't fall asleep, don't force it. Get up and move around.

### Where can I get extra help?

**Sleep Scotland Support Line:**  
<https://www.sleepscotland.org/support/sleep-counselling/sleep-support-line/>

**NHS 24 Video on Sleep:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7Hy5WVkfsk>

**NHS Wellbeing Better Sleep Self-Help Resources:**  
<https://www.wellbeing-glasgow.org.uk/better-sleep-resources>