

12 steps to good sleep practice



- 1.** Make sure that your child's bedroom is quiet and that the lighting is dim. Don't use televisions or electrical items in the bedroom. At bedtime, close the curtains and make sure that toys are hidden away. You can use black-out blinds if necessary.
- 2.** Wake your child at the same time every morning, not before 6am, to reinforce their daily cycle.
- 3.** Check the average sleep needs chart and work out an age appropriate bedtime for your child.
- 4.** Stick to a regular bedtime and a consistent routine. A visual timetable can help your child to understand what is going to happen next in the countdown to bedtime.
- 5.** Keep the room temperature between 16-18 degrees celsius, as high temperatures can disturb sleep.
- 6.** Try and keep noise levels, like televisions, in the evening to a minimum.
- 7.** Make sure that your child does not go to bed hungry.
- 8.** Help your child to fall asleep alone in their bed, without you staying in the room. You can find out more about this from your sleep practitioner.
- 9.** In the hour before bedtime, avoid stimulating activities. Encourage quiet play like jigsaws or colouring instead.
- 10.** Plan naps for early afternoon if they are age appropriate.
- 11.** Include sleep-inducing foods in the last meal before bedtime. Avoid drinks like cola, chocolate, tea and coffee. Instead offer a warm milky drink.
- 12.** Try this as an example of a good bedtime routine:

In the hour before bedtime encourage 20 minutes of quiet play such as jigsaws and colouring activities. Offer a drink and snack and use visual clues to signal bedtime, such as closing the curtains and dimming the lights.

Once you have left the bathroom to go to the bedroom, you should remain in the bedroom with your child. Read a bedtime story but ensure that it's within a clearly defined time and does not go on indefinitely. Ten minutes is usually good for this.

Dim the lights. Say goodnight in the same way each night, about three minutes. Then leave your child to settle alone.