

PaWS Parent Guide



Trouble Sleeping

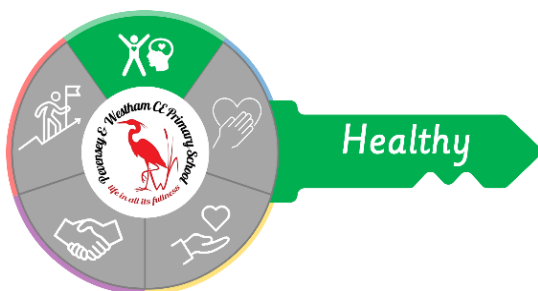
Sleep is an important part of maintaining good health. The impact of children struggling to sleep can impact on the whole family. School-age children need between 9 and 12 hours of sleep each night. Consider the suggestions below and be consistent with your approach. Make sure that you give your strategies time to work.



Have you tried the following?

Set an agreed bedtime and wake-up time with your child. It is important to be consistent with the schedule. If you're your child struggles with routines, it can be important to keep to agreed times, even at the weekends.

Create a consistent 'winding-down' bedtime routine. Create a regular after dinner routine to include light playtime; bath/wash, brushing teeth, a bedtime story, and then bed. Aim for a routine that is comforting and relaxing, setting a calming bedtime atmosphere. If your child gets up, keep taking them back to bed again with as little fuss as possible.



Turn off the screens at least 2 hours before bedtime.

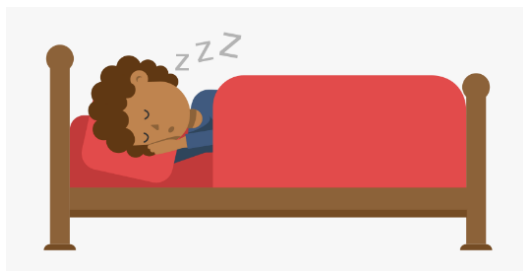
Watching TV, playing video games, or scrolling web pages on a phone or computer right before bed keep your child up an extra 30 to 60 minutes. Keep screens out of the bedroom including parents own mobile phones. Reading to your child in the evening allows their brain to rest.

Create a sleep-inducing environment. Soft sheets, room darkening shades, and relative quiet can help your child differentiate between day and night, making it easier to fall asleep.

Keep it cool. Your child's sleep cycle isn't just dependent on light (or the lack thereof). It's also sensitive to temperature. Don't bundle your child up too much or set the heat too high. Researcher recommend dressing your child in breathable cotton pyjamas and keeping the bedroom temperature around 18.3°C to 21.1°C at night.

Help alleviate fears Ghosts and other scary creatures may not actually roam around at night, but instead of dismissing bedtime fears, address them with your child. If simple reassurance doesn't work, try using a special toy to stand guard at night or spray the room with "monster spray" before bed. Try to address any fears during the day and avoid using bedtime for this type of conversation.

Reduce the focus on sleep. Children can have trouble shutting their brains off for the night. So, instead of increasing that anxiety by insisting that it's time to go to bed ("now!"), consider focusing more on relaxation and keeping your child calm. Try teaching your child a deep breathing technique to calm their body. "Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds, hold for 5 seconds, exhale through your mouth for 6 seconds,"



Find out more:

NHS Sleep Guide for School age children:

<https://www.wsh.nhs.uk/CMS-Documents/Patient-leaflets/PaediatricDepartment/6339-1-Sleep-a-guide-for-school-age-children.pdf>

National Sleep Foundation:

<https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-topics/childrenand-sleep>

The Sleep Charity

<https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/children>