

Children and Sleep

Sometimes, parents find themselves struggling with bedtime routines, children's wakefulness in the middle of the night, and children who have trouble waking in the morning or coping through the morning rush.

Here is one approach to reviewing your current practices and designing small, do-able changes. Addressing one or more of these items can have a positive effect for your child:

1. Many children (and parents) are chronically sleep-deprived. The starting point for working with any sleep problems or questions is to review the sleep needs for the age of the child. For young children who still nap, this means the total hours of sleep per 24-hour period, including naps.
2. What time would be the best time for your child to wake up each morning? Considerations include how long it takes to complete each element of the morning schedule: waking, cuddling, eating, brushing and flossing teeth, dressing, playing, a bit of dawdling (some children need this!) and meeting a target time like getting into the car to go to childcare or school. Once you have picked the best time for your child to wake-up each morning, commit to the consistency of this being the wake-up time 7 days per week. Many families make the mistake of staying up later and “sleeping in” on weekends, which then disrupts sleep and waking time during the week.
3. Now that you have a goal for a consistent waking up time, solve backwards for the total number of sleep hours needed. Set that time as the target for your child to fall asleep, and then set bedtime one half hour before that. Again, while there will be occasional exceptions, it is best to stick to a consistent bedtime – and consistent half-hour falling asleep ritual – 7 days per week.
4. Consider everything that happens in the two to three hours leading up to falling asleep. We can consciously design this period of the day as “winding-down” time, with everything getting slower and calmer and darker to aid going to sleep. Tips for this period includes:
 - Arrange for the last meal of the day to end (eating ends) two to three hours before sleep time.
 - Shift stimulating activities, bright lighting, etc. to the beginning of this period.
 - If bath time is relaxing, it can happen closer to bedtime. If bath time riles your child up, move it earlier in the evening routine.
 - Turn off electronics and screens two hours before sleep time and keep them out of the bedroom.
 - Dim home lighting more and more as you get closer to bedtime.
 - Limit the bedtime ritual to one half hour or less. If your child needs you to stay in the room to fall asleep, stop talking midway through the half hour and be your most boring and calm self!

Remember, if a healthy child (or adult) is having trouble waking up in the morning, the solution is to stick to the same “getting up” time and commit to an earlier bedtime for recovery sleep, *not sleeping in*.



How Much Sleep Do You Really Need?	
Age	Sleep Needs
Newborns (0-2 months)	12-18 hours
Infants (3 to 11 months)	14 to 15 hours
Toddlers (1-3 years)	12 to 14 hours
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	11 to 13 hours
School-age children (5-10 years)	10 to 11 hours
Teens (10-17)	8.5-9.25 hours
Adults	7-9 hours

Source: National Sleep Foundation

Sources that may be of interest:

- Russell Foster <https://youtu.be/LWULB9Aoopc>
- Jeff Iliff <https://youtu.be/MJK-dMIATmM>
- Gordon Neufeld <https://youtu.be/tqj7RGwsBCQ>