



# Sleep hygiene in children

Healthy habits that encourage better sleep, to help you stay refreshed and aware during the day, are called sleep hygiene.





The amount of sleep your child needs changes as they get older.

Sleep needs: children of different ages require different amounts of sleep.

A 5-year-old needs about 11 hours a night, for example, whilst a 9-year-old needs roughly 10 hours.

Doing the same relaxing things in the same order and at the same time each night helps promote good sleep and encourages good sleep patterns:

A warm (not hot) bath will help your child relax and get ready for sleep.

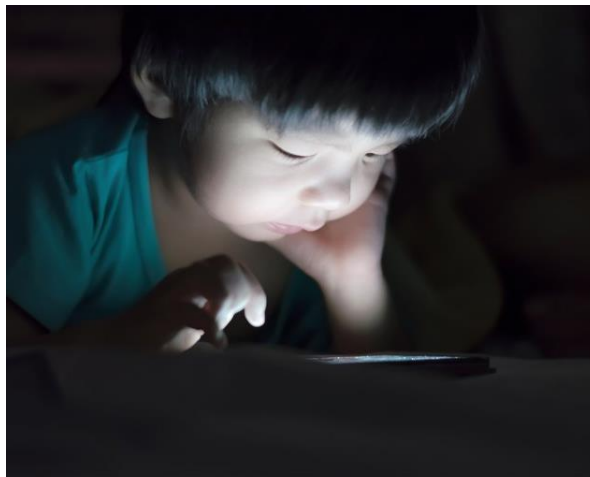
Keeping lights dim encourages your child's body to produce the sleep hormone, melatonin.

Once they're in bed, encourage your child to read quietly or listen to some relaxing music, or read a story together.

A routine of bath, story and bed can help younger children feel ready for sleep.

For older children, the routine might include a quiet chat with you about the day then some time alone relaxing before lights out.





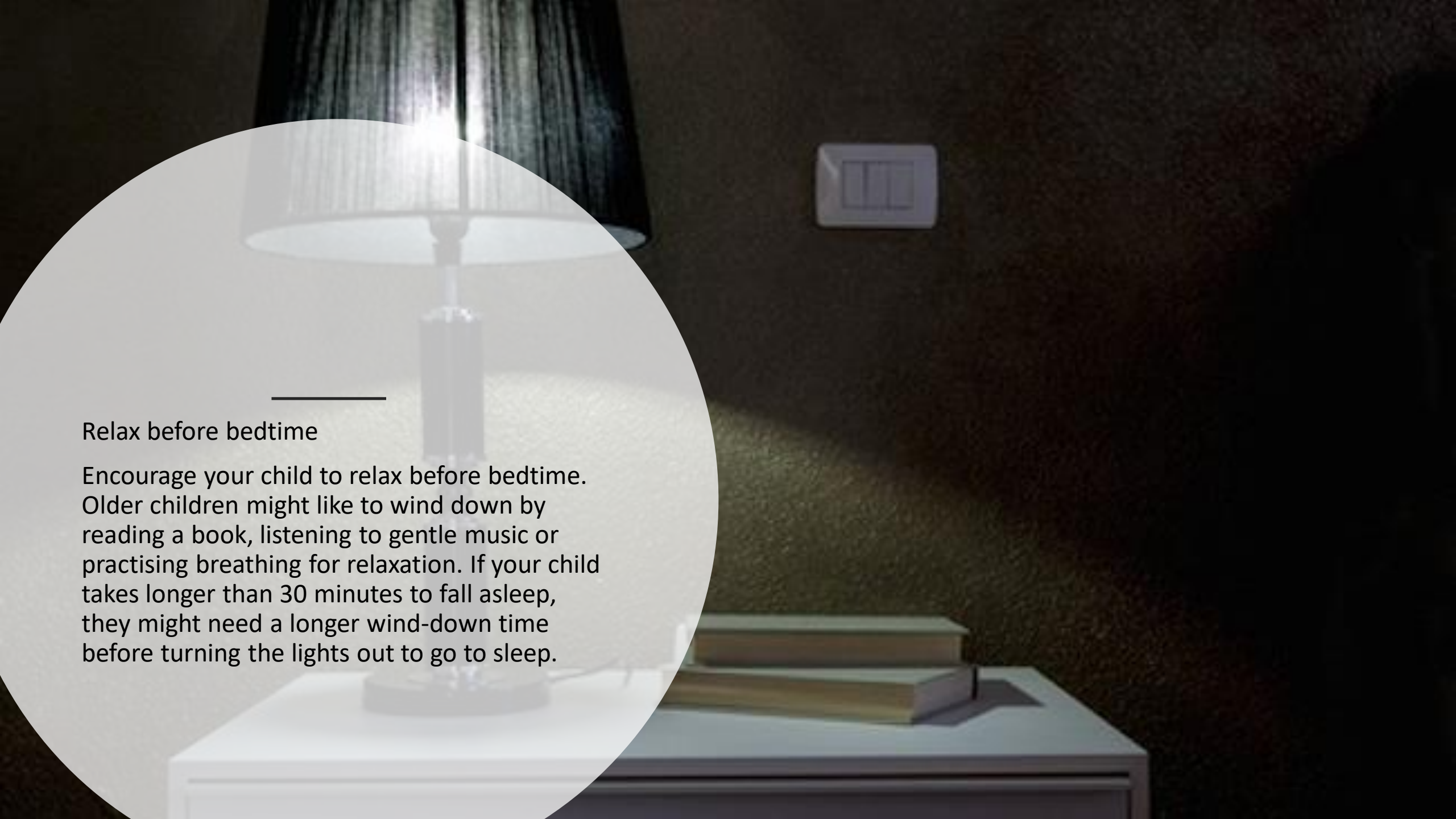
Tablets, smartphones, TVs and other electronic gadgets can affect how easily children get to sleep.

Older children may also stay up late or even wake in the middle of the night to use social media.

Try to keep your child's bedroom a screen-free zone and get them to charge their phones in another room.

Encourage your child to stop using screens an hour before bedtime. Your child's bedroom should ideally be dark, quiet and tidy. It should be well ventilated and kept at a temperature of about 18 to 24C.

Fit some thick curtains to block out any daylight. If there's noise outside, consider investing in double glazing or, for a cheaper option, offer your child earplugs.



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## Relax before bedtime

Encourage your child to relax before bedtime. Older children might like to wind down by reading a book, listening to gentle music or practising breathing for relaxation. If your child takes longer than 30 minutes to fall asleep, they might need a longer wind-down time before turning the lights out to go to sleep.



Keep regular sleep and wake times:  
Keep your child's bedtimes and wake-up times within 1-2 hours of each other each day. This helps to keep your child's body clock in a regular pattern. It's a good idea for weekends and holidays, as well as school days.

Keep older children's naps early and short

Most children stop napping at 3-5 years of age. If your child over five years is still napping during the day, try to keep the nap to no longer than 20 minutes and no later than early afternoon. Longer and later naps can make it harder for children to get to sleep at night.





Make sure your child feels safe at night

If your child feels scared about going to bed or being in the dark, you can praise and reward them whenever they're brave. Avoiding scary TV shows, movies and computer games can help too. Some children with bedtime fears feel better when they have a night light.

A child's bedroom with a bed, chair, and nightstand. The room is decorated with a patterned rug, a chair, a bed with a patterned blanket, and a nightstand with a mug. The wall has a pattern of raindrops and a framed picture. A sign on the floor says "#NIGHT NIGHT".

## Check noise and light in your child's bedroom

A quiet, dimly lit space is important for good sleep. Check whether your child's bedroom is too light or noisy for sleep. Blue light from televisions, computer screens, phones and tablets might suppress melatonin levels and delay sleepiness. It probably helps to turn these off at least one hour before bedtime and to keep screens out of your child's room at night.



Avoid the clock

If your child is checking the time often, encourage him to move his clock or watch to a spot where he can't see it.



Eat the right amount at the right time

Make sure your child has a satisfying evening meal at a reasonable time. Feeling hungry or too full before bed can make your child more alert or uncomfortable. This can make it harder for her to get to sleep. In the morning, a healthy breakfast helps to kick-start your child's body clock at the right time.





Get plenty of natural light in the day  
Encourage your child to get as much natural light as possible during the day, especially in the morning. Bright light suppresses melatonin. This helps your child feel awake and alert during the day and sleepy towards bedtime.

Avoid caffeine

Caffeine is in energy drinks, coffee, tea, chocolate and cola. Encourage your child to avoid these things in the late afternoon and evening, and don't offer them to them at this time.





## WORRY

This will have an impact on sleep.

Children worry about all kinds of things-things we would not expect them to worry about,

From school, to friends, to homework, to more serious things like being bullied, problems at home, peer pressure, social media. Things they have watched and heard.

All these things will affect sleep if a child becomes consumed with them.

A helpful tool to use with worry is the worry tree.

It puts worry into context a little bit for the child.

If they can control the worry-let's do something about it so it is no longer a worry.

If the worry cannot be controlled - if someone or something has control over that worry - then the child needs to let it go, because worrying about it is not helpful or constructive. It can also negatively affect sleep and functioning.