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## Bedtime Routines

A good routine is important to help children to develop better sleep habits. You must be consistent when you implement a new routine, your child's sleep patterns may appear to become worse before they get better as they may try to resist new changes that you make. Parents often give up when implementing a routine as they feel that it isn't working, you need to give any changes at least 2 weeks in order to see results.

Here are our top tips for developing a good bedtime routine:

- Do the same thing at the same time each day, including waking your child at the same time each morning, this will strengthen their body clock. Yes we know this is hard on a Saturday and Sunday, but it is also very important!
- Switch off computers and televisions an hour before bedtime, these can be very stimulating activities and can hinder a good night's sleep. Screen activity can also interfere with the body's production of the sleep hormone melatonin!



Continued overleaf

- Fine motor skill activities help children to relax, encourage them to take part in these before bedtime. Colouring in, jigsaws, threading activities all help to promote relaxation. You will need to plan appropriate relaxing activities in advance.
- If your child enjoys being bathed then you should include this within your routine. A bath 30 minutes before bed is perfect for aiding sleep. The decrease in body temperature after getting out of a bath makes us feel sleepy around half an hour later.
- Give your child warnings that bedtime is approaching, you may use a visual timetable to show them what is going to happen next.
- Use calming music as part of your bedtime routine to help your child to begin to wind down.
- Say goodnight and leave your child to fall asleep by themselves if possible.
- Do not leave your child watching television or listening to CDs if they have sleep issues, they must learn to fall asleep by themselves at the start of the night so that they can then resettle themselves to sleep should they wake up during the night.
- Write down the routine so that everybody involved knows what the procedure is.
- A bedtime story is a lovely way to end the day.



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