



Family *wisdom*

Every few weeks we provide advice, expectations and support around the foundations of good child development. The aim is to prepare our children for adulthood. These cover:

1. Listening and attention;
2. Sleep, exercise and diet;
3. Preventing children from seeing harm/trauma/inappropriate TV or games;
4. Hygiene and personal care;
5. Boundaries and routines/assertive parenting;
6. Socialising.

If you have a good idea or thought to contribute, please get in touch with us.

Sleep, exercise and diet

These three act as magic pills - getting the right amount is the best way to achieve good physical and mental health. This week we look at the wisdom around sleep.

What is the recommended amount of sleep for children?

- 4–12 months: 12–16 hours, including naps.
- 1–2 years: 11–14 hours, including naps. i.e. 7pm bedtime
- 3–5 years: 10–13 hours, including naps. i.e. 7pm bedtime
- 6–11 years: 9–12 hours. i.e. 8pm bedtime

How long before bed should I stop screen time?

Pausing screen-related activities **at least an hour before bedtime** gives your brain a chance to wind down and signals to your body that it's time to sleep. However, if you push that buffer to 90 minutes or 2 hours, the benefits can be even greater.

'Sleep hygiene' is having a healthy and consistent bedtime routine in place. Does yours include:

- beginning 30 minutes to two hours before bedtime?
- activities to help wind down, such as a warm bath/shower or reading a story?
- following the same pattern each night? (there will be the odd occasion where it has to be different)
- going to the toilet as the last task before getting into bed? This can help prevent your child from needing to get up at night.
- a self-settling routine e.g. kiss, cuddle and 'I love you!' before you leave? My girls loved having a back massage before we left them to sleep, with a 'sleep tight, don't let the bug beds bite'. These are good cues for them to drift off.

Self-settling - this is the end goal!

It is important that they learn to self-settle (fall asleep on their own) rather than seeking a parent or joining a parent's bed. Our aim is to prepare our children for adulthood, one step at a time. The first step might be practising self-settling with a sleepover at a relative's house. Self-settling can be difficult to enforce, and may be emotionally challenging, for both child and parent, but parents should remain firm and assertive.

- If your child leaves their bed and seeks you out at night-time, try not to engage them in conversation, but lead them quietly and immediately back to bed. This may need to be repeated several times each night, but it is important that your child learns that they will receive the same response from you each time.
- If your child is anxious, the use of a night light, cuddly toy or baby monitor may help them to feel safe and learn how to self-settle.
- Praising your child in the morning for staying in bed at night can help reinforce good behaviour



If your child has any worries, falling asleep might be the time when they are preoccupied with these thoughts. It is a good idea to discuss these before bedtime, and maybe write them down so they don't interfere with the bedtime routine.

Need more help?

Every child's trajectory is different, and some children will have additional needs. You may need to make some adjustments (you know your child best!) but 99% of our children have the same end goal - just maybe a different route to achieve it.

If you need more information, check out this resource <https://www.devonscp.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing/sleep/> or speak to your GP or our SENDCo.