



Sleep Tips For Children Aged 3-5



Background

- Sleep is key for the healthy growth and development of children.
- Sleep helps with a child's attention, learning and memory.
- The Canadian Paediatric Society (2017) recommends that children aged 3-5 years old sleep 10-13 hours per day, which includes naps.
- **Common sleep problems** in children include resisting going to bed, trouble falling asleep and waking at night.

How to Help Your Child

Set a regular sleep schedule

Create a schedule to ensure your child has consistent nap and bedtimes.

- This means sleeping and waking at the same time every day, including the weekends.
- A bedtime between 7 and 8 p.m. is appropriate for children three to five years old.

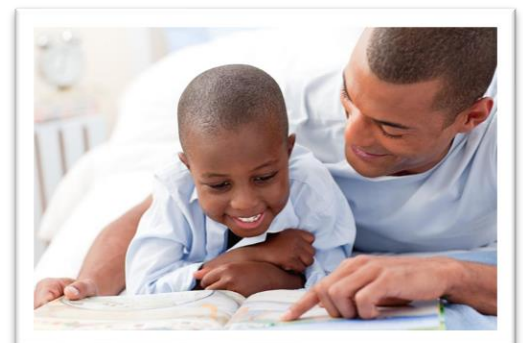
Engage in a bedtime routine

Having a consistent bedtime routine helps your child gradually relax and feel safe before going to sleep. Here is an example of a calming routine:

- 6:30p.m. – Warm bath or gentle massage
- 6:50 p.m. – Put on PJs and brush teeth
- 7:00 p.m. – Share a happy story from your day and read a favourite book
- 7:15 p.m. – **Bear breathing** (take 3 deep breaths in and out) and fall asleep with a teddy bear

Other relaxing bedtime activities:

- Singing a favourite song together, try "**You are my sunshine**"
- Quiet music
- Snuggle time, hugs and kisses
- Recall a positive memory
- A quick meditation routine, such as **Body Scan**
- Bedtime yoga, such as **Cosmic Kids**





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Give your child a teddy bear

A security toy, such as a teddy bear or blanket, can help your child feel more comfortable and secure at bedtime.



Create a safe sleep environment

- Make your child's bedroom dark, quiet and cool. Night lights may be used short-term if your child requests one.
- Keep your child's bedroom screen free (no TV, smartphone, or tablet).
- Avoid electronic use at least 1 hour before bedtime or sooner.
- Try to limit screen time to less than 1 hour per day for 3-5 year-olds.
- Some children may benefit from [white noise](#) in the background.



Promote a healthy lifestyle

- Make sure your child does lots of exercise every day, like running around at the playground, going to the swimming pool or biking.
- Give your child a healthy, balanced diet with lots of fruits and vegetables.
- Limit food and drinks with caffeine (chocolate and soda), especially close to bedtime.

Resources

For further information, check out these links:

- [Canadian Paediatric Society - Healthy sleep for your baby and child](#)
- [Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development – Sleep behaviour](#)
- [HelpGuide – Childhood Insomnia and Sleep Problems](#)
- [Vancouver Coastal Health - Sleep and your preschooler](#)
- [Better Nights, Better Days](#)
- [Little Stories for Tiny People Podcast](#)

Check out these books on sleep:

- *My Body: Why Do I Sleep?* by Angela Royston
- *Goodnight, Daniel Tiger* by Angela Santomero
- *Sweet Dreams: Bedtime Visualizations for Kids* by Mariam Gates
- *The Bedtime Book* by Todd Pear
- *Kiss Good Night* by Amy Hest
- *Night-Night, Forest Friends* by Annie Bach
- *Good Night, Sleep Tight* by Claire Freedman
- *Can't You Sleep, Little Bear?* By Martin Waddell

For more book recommendations, see the Reading Bear Society [Bedtime Book List](#)

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