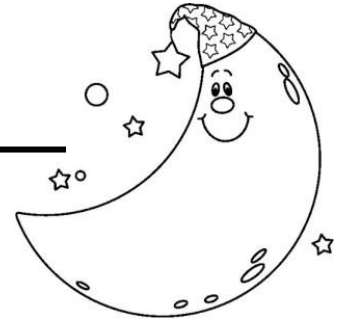




# Sleep Strategies



## For Toddlers & Preschoolers

### Bedtime and wake time schedule:

- Set a consistent sleep schedule of bedtimes and wakeup times. Keep this schedule the same for everyday of the week, including weekends.
- Keep nap times consistent throughout the day. Wake your child before 4:00pm at the very latest
- If your child takes more than 1 hour to fall asleep, consider pushing their bedtime back by 30-60 minutes.

### Pre-bedtime routine:

- Create a consistent pre-bedtime routine that follows a predictable sequence of events
  - (ie. bath → change into pajamas → brush teeth → story → bed)
  - Try including visuals to increase your child's understanding
- Choose activities that are positive and calming for your child
- Start routine 15-30 minutes before bedtime.

### Become a "sleep detective":

- Try writing down and tracking your child's sleep routines and patterns
- Discover which activities/events make your child excited, and which are calming. Try to schedule events that are exciting earlier on in the evening, and calming events closer to bedtime.

### Improve their bedtime environment:

- Lighting
  - Dark lighting is best – can use a dim nightlight if your child has fears
  - Make sure blinking or shining lights are off (turn away alarm clocks, turn off electronics)
- Temperature
  - Cooler environments are typically best for sleep.
- Noise
  - Limit noise in your child's environment that may be alerting.
  - If some noise is calming for your child, you can try to use soft lullabies, calming music, or white noise during bedtime routine to help them fall asleep. Try not to use a phone or an iPad for this as the device can be distracting.

### Turn off the screens:

- Screen time should end 1-2 hours before bed.
- Exposure to screens before bed can make it more difficult for your child to fall asleep.

### Avoid caffeine:

- Read food and drink labels; as many snacks and drinks contain caffeine.
- Caffeine is a stimulant that can make it more difficult for your child to fall asleep.

### Be consistent!

- It can take 2-3 weeks of using the sleep strategies consistently before your child settles in to their new routine.

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### Resources

- <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/keep-tots-away-tech-better-sleep>
- <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/12/161230123034.html>
- Strategies to Improve Sleep in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Parent's Guide by Autism Treatment Network (ATN) and Autism Intervention Research Network on Physical Health (AIR-P).  
<https://www.autismspeaks.org/tool-kit/atnair-p-strategies-improve-sleep-children-autism>