



Sleep tips for young children

Why is sleep important?

Sleep is important for restoring energy and for growth and development.

There is increasing evidence that not enough, or poor quality, sleep can negatively affect children's behaviour, learning, health, wellbeing and weight.

How much sleep does my child need in 24 hours?

The table below shows the recommended total hours of sleep (including naps) per day for children from birth to 5 years. Some children naturally sleep slightly less or more than the recommended time.



Age	Recommended (hours)
Newborn (0–3 months)	14–17
Infant (4–11 months)	12–15
Toddler (1–2 years)	11–14
Preschool (3–4 years)	10–13
5 year olds	9–11

Adapted from the National Sleep Foundation: How much sleep do we really need?

For more details, go to Sleep Tips for Young Children at health.govt.nz

It is not just the amount of sleep that is important but also the quality of that sleep. The following tips may be helpful.



How can I improve my child's sleep?

- Have a regular bedtime routine. This might include a bath, brushing their teeth, a story then bed. Quiet activities are good before bed. Avoid active games, playing outside and screen use (eg, TV, internet, computer games) in the hour before bedtime.
- Have a regular bedtime and wake up time. It helps your child to understand when it is time to sleep.
- Have a comfortable sleep environment. The place where they sleep should be quiet, warm and dark (though a night light is okay).
- Have no distractions in the place where children sleep, including TV, computer screens and portable devices.
- A meal within 1 to 2 hours of going to sleep is not recommended. However, a light snack may help some children.
- Avoid giving your child food and drinks containing caffeine as this can affect their sleep.
- It is normal for young children to have naps during the day. As they get older, they will need less sleep and fewer naps. If your child has a nap after 4 pm (except for newborns and infants), it may be harder for them to get to sleep at night.
- It is important for children to be active throughout the day. Activity can also help your child to sleep. Time spent in bright sunlight, such as being active outside, can also help children to sleep, but don't forget to be sunsmart! Avoid lots of activity in the hour before bedtime.
- Being unwell can also affect your child's sleep. If your child snores a lot or stops breathing for short periods while asleep, discuss this with your GP.

These tips were adapted from the Australian Sleep Health Foundation's Sleep Tips for Children.