



## Helping children (5–12 years old) sleep better

### Why sleep is important

Sleep is important for restoring energy and helping children grow and develop.

More and more evidence suggests that not enough or poor quality sleep can have a negative effect on a child's behaviour, learning, health, wellbeing and weight.

### How much sleep your child needs in 24 hours

The table below shows the recommended total hours of sleep per day for children and young people. Some children naturally sleep slightly less or more than these recommended hours.



Age	Recommended (hours)
School age (5–13 years)	9–11
Teenagers (14–17 years)	8–10
Young adults (18–25 years)	7–9

Adapted from the National Sleep Foundation

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

### Ways you can improve your child's sleep<sup>1</sup>

- Have a regular bedtime routine: this might include your child having a shower, brushing their teeth, then going to bed. Quiet activities, like reading, are good before bed.
- Have a regular bedtime and wake up time. This will help your child understand when it is time to sleep.
- If your child is going to bed too late, gradually change this by having them go to bed 30 minutes earlier and get up 30 minutes earlier.

- Avoid active games, playing outside, and screen use (eg, TV, internet, computer games, etc) in the hour before bedtime. Try dimming the lights earlier.
- Arrange a comfortable sleeping environment for your child. The place where they sleep should be quiet, warm and dark (although a night light is OK).
- Don't have any distractions within sight or hearing of the area where children sleep, including TV or any kind of computer screen.
- Avoid having your child eat a meal within 1 or 2 hours of going to sleep. However, a light snack or a milky drink may help some children.
- Avoid giving your child food and any drinks that contain caffeine (especially in the afternoon/evening) as this can affect their sleep.
- It is important for children to be active throughout the day. Activity can also help your child sleep. Time spent in bright sunlight, such as being active outside, can also help children to sleep, but don't forget to be SunSmart!
- Illness can affect your child's sleep. If your child snores a lot or stops breathing for short periods while asleep, discuss this with your GP.
- Irregular or insufficient sleep can be a symptom of depression. Discuss this with your GP.

The Australian Sleep Health Foundation has a range of factsheets on sleep health, including behavioural sleep problems in school-aged children, teenage sleep, understanding and helping poor sleep, and technology and sleep ([www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au](http://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au)).



1. Adapted from the Australian Sleep Health Foundation ([www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au](http://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au)): Sleep Tips for Children