

Tuesday, 23rd September 2025

Dear Parent/Carer,

Supporting Your Child at Home

At Grace Academy we recognise the importance of supporting your child holistically both at home as well as in school to enable them to maximise their Limitless Potential.

We realise that today's world means our children are active on devices such as mobile phones, tablets, laptops and computers far more than previously. It is scientifically proven that students need sleep in order to engage at school and in all their activities during the day. To facilitate this, healthy sleeping habits, bedtime routines and reducing exposure to electronic devices before bedtime are all essential. The amount and quality of sleep is also impacted by caffeine and food and when this is consumed. We have attached a leaflet from the School Nursing Service which gives really helpful information on how to help your child and we hope you find it useful.

By working together with our families, both in school and outside, we aim to support with building our students' Intentional Excellence.

If you need any support please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Suzie Scott, our Family Support Worker, at: suziescott@graceacademy.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs E Wheller
Associate Principal

Executive Principal:
Mrs N Whiles

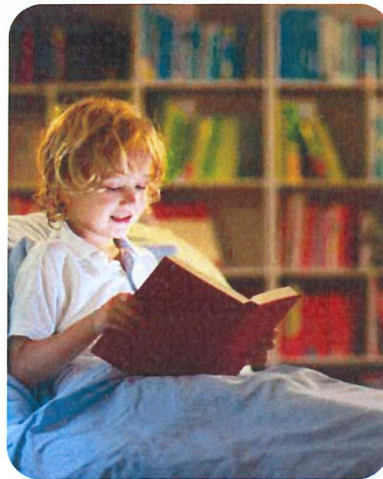
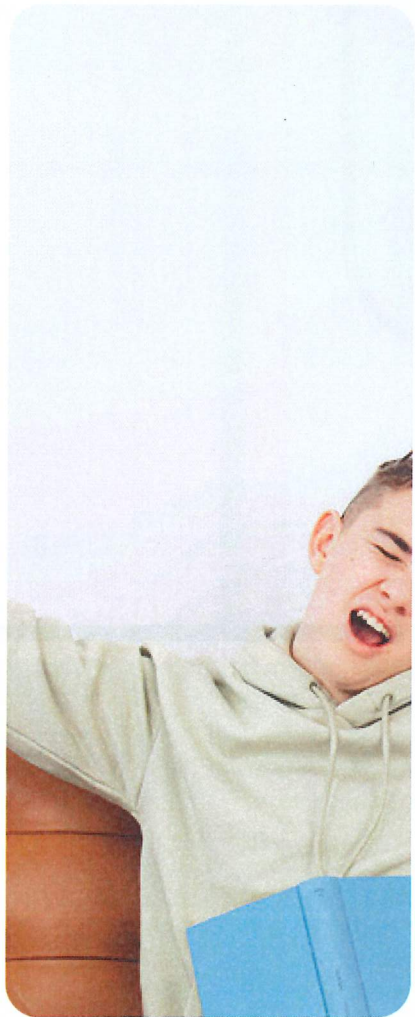
Associate Principal:
Mrs E Wheller

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Monthly Health & Wellbeing Newsletter

September 2025 Edition



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Health Focus of the Month

Healthy Sleep and Routines

Why does sleep matter?

Did you know that sleep is one of the most important things for a child's health and happiness? It's true! Getting enough good-quality sleep helps children and young people remember what they learn, stay focused in class, boost their immune system, and even help them to manage their feelings better. But with busy school days and active social lives, sometimes sleep can get pushed to the back burner.

This month, we're talking all about sleep health and routines. We'll share why a good night's sleep matters so much and offer some easy tips to help students (and the whole family) build bedtime habits that really work. When children get the rest they need, they're more ready to take on the day - whether that's learning, playing, or just being the best mood possible.

Take a read to find out ways that you can support your child to wake up feeling refreshed, happy, and ready for anything!



How much sleep do children and teenagers really need?

Sleep needs will change as your child grows, and getting the right amount is key to feeling good and staying healthy.

Primary Aged Children

10-12
hours per night

Secondary Aged Children

8-10
hours per night

How can I tell if my child isn't getting enough sleep?

Sometimes it's not easy to know if your child is missing out on good-quality sleep, especially if they're older and less likely to wake you up in the night. If a child isn't sleeping enough, it can affect how they feel and behave during the day. Here are some common signs to look out for which could show tiredness and a lack of sleep:



1

Trouble paying attention

They might seem easily distracted or have trouble focusing in school or at home.

2

Frequent yawning or eye rubbing

A classic sign that your child is tired or is not getting enough sleep.

3

Mood changes

They could be irritable or have more emotional outbursts than usual.

4

Hyperactivity or restlessness

Sometimes children can be more energetic or fidgety when they're actually over-tired.

5

Falling asleep during quiet times

Like during reading, car rides, or in school during lessons.

6

Difficulty waking up in the morning

They might struggle to get out of bed or need more time in the morning to feel alert.



Common Sleep Challenges

There can be a number of things which cause children to have difficulty sleeping, or staying asleep. These challenges can impact the overall quality and length of their sleep. Here are some of the most common ones:

Difficulty winding down at bedtime

After a busy day of learning and playing, it can be hard for children to change gears and start relaxing. If their mind and body is racing, it can delay their bedtime and lead to less sleep.

"MUST TRY"

A bedtime routine can help your child relax and get settled before going to bed, leading to them drifting off quicker and having a more restful nights sleep. Visit page 4 for advice on how to create an effective bedtime routine.



TOP TIPS

Try to include some quiet time in your evening to talk to your child and see if there's anything they might be worried about. Even if there isn't, it's nice to talk to them about their day and have some bonding time.

Worries or anxiety

Even younger children can feel stress about school, friendships and family. These worries can often show up at bedtime when it's quiet and their thoughts catch up with them.

Irregular bedtimes

Going to sleep and waking up at different times each day can disrupt your child's natural body clock and lead to difficulty getting to sleep.

TRY!

Children thrive with consistency. Try to keep them on the same bedtime and wake-up time throughout the week where possible.

TIPS

Make sure they have gone to the toilet before bedtime - With support and reassurance, children can become fully continent and stop wetting during the night. Visit our website for more continence support.

Night-time wetting

Some children might wake up due to night-time wetting. This can cause broken sleep and sometimes anxiety around bedtime.

Having too much caffeine

Caffeine can sneak into your child's diets without you realising - lots of fizzy drinks and energy drinks contain large amounts of caffeine which can have a negative impact on their sleep.

LET'S GO!

Identify any food or drink which your child might have which contains caffeine and try to reduce or remove these from their diet.

Creating a successful bedtime routine...

A consistent and calming bedtime routine can make a big difference in helping children fall asleep more easily and stay asleep through the night. Here are some simple tips you can use to create a peaceful wind-down routine at home:

Stick to a regular bedtime

Try to stick to the same bedtime and wake-up time every day (even on weekends). This helps the body's internal clock stay in sync and makes it easier to fall asleep naturally. Sometimes you may have to change this due to activities, events or travel - but it's important to try and be consistent where you can.

Create a bedtime routine that's predictable

A short simple routine is easy to follow and remember. Doing the same things in the same order each night builds a comforting rhythm.

Limit screen time before bed

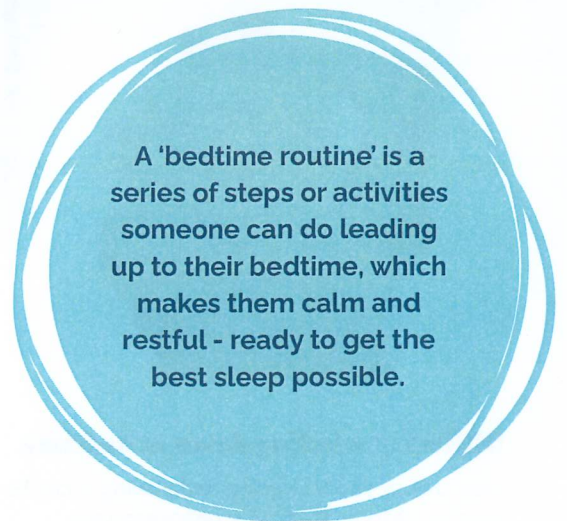
Turn off TVs, tablets and phones at least an hour before bedtime. The blue light from screens can make it harder for children and young people to feel sleepy.

Add a calming activity

A gentle bedtime story, breathing exercises, or soft music can help children relax and feel ready for sleep.



Consistency is key. Even if it takes a little time to adjust, a calm, reliable routine can help children feel safe, relaxed, and ready for a good night's sleep.



A 'bedtime routine' is a series of steps or activities someone can do leading up to their bedtime, which makes them calm and restful - ready to get the best sleep possible.

Build in some wind-down time

Begin slowing things down about 1 hour before bedtime. Lower the noise levels and switch to calming activities like reading, drawing, or puzzles.

Make the bedroom sleep-friendly

Keep the room, quiet, cool and dark. A favourite teddy, nightlight, or white noise machine can help some children feel more settled and secure. Figure out what works best for them.

Avoid big meals or sugary snacks before bed

A light snack is fine, but try to avoid sugary treats or anything that contains caffeine close to bedtime.



How can screen time affect my child's sleep?

Today screens and technology are a big part of our children's lives. From learning apps and children's TV, to video calls with family and gaming. But did you know that too much screen time, especially before bed, can affect how well your child sleeps?



The Screen - Sleep Connection

Using screens like tablets, TVs, phones, or computers too close to bedtime can:



Understanding Melatonin - The Sleep Hormone

What is melatonin?

Melatonin is a hormone our brains produce when it gets dark. It sends a signal to the body that it's time to relax and get ready for sleep. Think of it as the body's "sleep switch."



How do screens get in the way?

All screens give off a type of blue light. This light tricks the brain into thinking it's still daytime. When this happens the brain slows down melatonin production and your child may feel more alert and awake, instead of sleepy. It can then become harder for them to fall asleep and stay asleep.

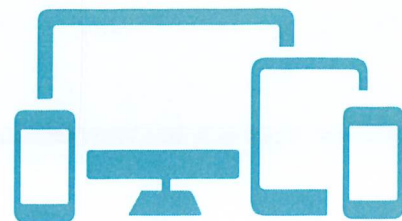
TOP TIPS



Turn off screens at least an hour before bed and try to keep screens out of the bedroom at night.



How can I reduce their screen time?



Set Clear Limits

Decide on daily screen time rules and stick to them. For example, no more than 1–2 hours per day outside of schoolwork. Use timers or screen time settings to help.

Create Screen-Free Zones

Keep screens out of bedrooms, the dinner table, and during family time. This helps children focus on real-world interactions and sleep.

Plan a Screen-Free Routine

Children thrive on structure. Plan a daily routine that includes screen-free activities such as: outdoor play, reading, craft time, meals together and wind-down before bed.

Offer Alternatives

Have a list of easy and fun non-screen activities ready to do like: puzzles, Lego, drawing, board games, playing outside, listening to audiobooks.

Be a Role Model

Children learn by watching behaviour around them. Show healthy habits by putting your own phone or device down during family time or before bed.

Talk About It

Explain why screen time is limited for better sleep, more energy, and healthier brains. Give your child the knowledge to make healthier decisions.

Use Devices Wisely

When screen time is used, choose high-quality, educational content and enjoy it together when possible. Co-viewing helps you guide what your child sees.



Remember that small steps can make a big difference - try out one thing to begin with and then build on your successes.



Bedroom Tips for Better Sleep

Try some of these quick tips for creating a relaxing and soothing bedroom environment for your child to get good-quality sleep in.



Keep a consistent bedtime routine

Create a calming routine and try to stick to the same bedtime and wake-up time (even on weekends).



Make their room dark and quiet

Use blackout curtains or shades to block the light - especially in the summer months.



Control the temperature

Keep their room at an ideal temperature for them to sleep - generally cooler temperatures help us sleep.



Limit screen time

Turn off all devices and screens at least 1 hour before bedtime - avoid placing screens in the bedroom if possible.



Create a calm space

Keep toys and distractions out of sight during sleep time.



Use dim lighting

Use a dimmable nightlight if your child doesn't like the dark. Avoid bright overhead lights close to bedtime.



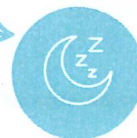
Choose the right bedding

Make sure their mattress and bedding is comfortable and appropriate for the season and temperature.



Use soothing colours

You could decorate their bedroom with soothing colours to create a relaxing atmosphere.



Sleep-only zone

Try to keep their bedroom as an area for sleeping - avoid letting them eat or do homework in their beds.

Why is my teenager always tired?

If your teenager seems to sleep more than ever, or if they struggle to wake up in the morning - you're not imagining things. It's not that they're lazy and not listening to you - it's all down to biology.

What's happening during puberty?

A number of changes affect children's bodies and brains as they go through puberty - including how they sleep. One key shift happens in their circadian rhythm, the internal clock that regulates when we feel sleepy and when we feel awake.

During puberty...

This rhythm naturally shifts by 1-2 hours, meaning teenagers start feeling sleepy later at night, often around 11pm or later. But most school schedules still require early wake-ups, making it hard for teens to get the sleep they need.



Their circadian rhythm naturally shifts 1-2 hours.



This means teenagers start feeling sleepy later at night.

DID YOU KNOW?

68%

Of teens do not sleep enough during school nights.

Teen Sleep Hub



Even though your teenager is growing older and gaining more independence, they will still benefit from all the usual sleep routine steps just like they did when they were younger.

TOP TIPS



Get some morning sunlight

Exposure to natural light in the morning helps signal the brain to wake up and shifts the body clock earlier. This can help teenagers when their circadian rhythm has shifted.



Teen Tech Tips for Better Sleep

Sleep can be a real challenge for teenagers, especially with the constant presence of phones, tablets, and gaming consoles. Encourage them to try some of these practical tips to wind down more easily, fall asleep faster, and wake up feeling more refreshed and ready for the day. Even small changes can make a big difference to their sleep quality and overall wellbeing.



Set a "Tech Limit"

Turn off all screens (phones, laptops, tablets and TVs) at least an hour before bed to help their brain wind down.



Use Night Mode

Enable 'Night Shift' or 'Blue Light Filter' on their devices in the evening to reduce the impact of blue light on their sleep.



Move your Charger

They should charge their phone away from their bed, out of arms reach to avoid the temptation of late night scrolling.



Mute Notifications

Tell them to use 'Do Not Disturb' mode or silence notifications overnight so messages and alerts will not wake them up.



Tech-Free Time

Get them to replace screen time with activities like yoga, journaling, meditating or reading to help them relax before bed.

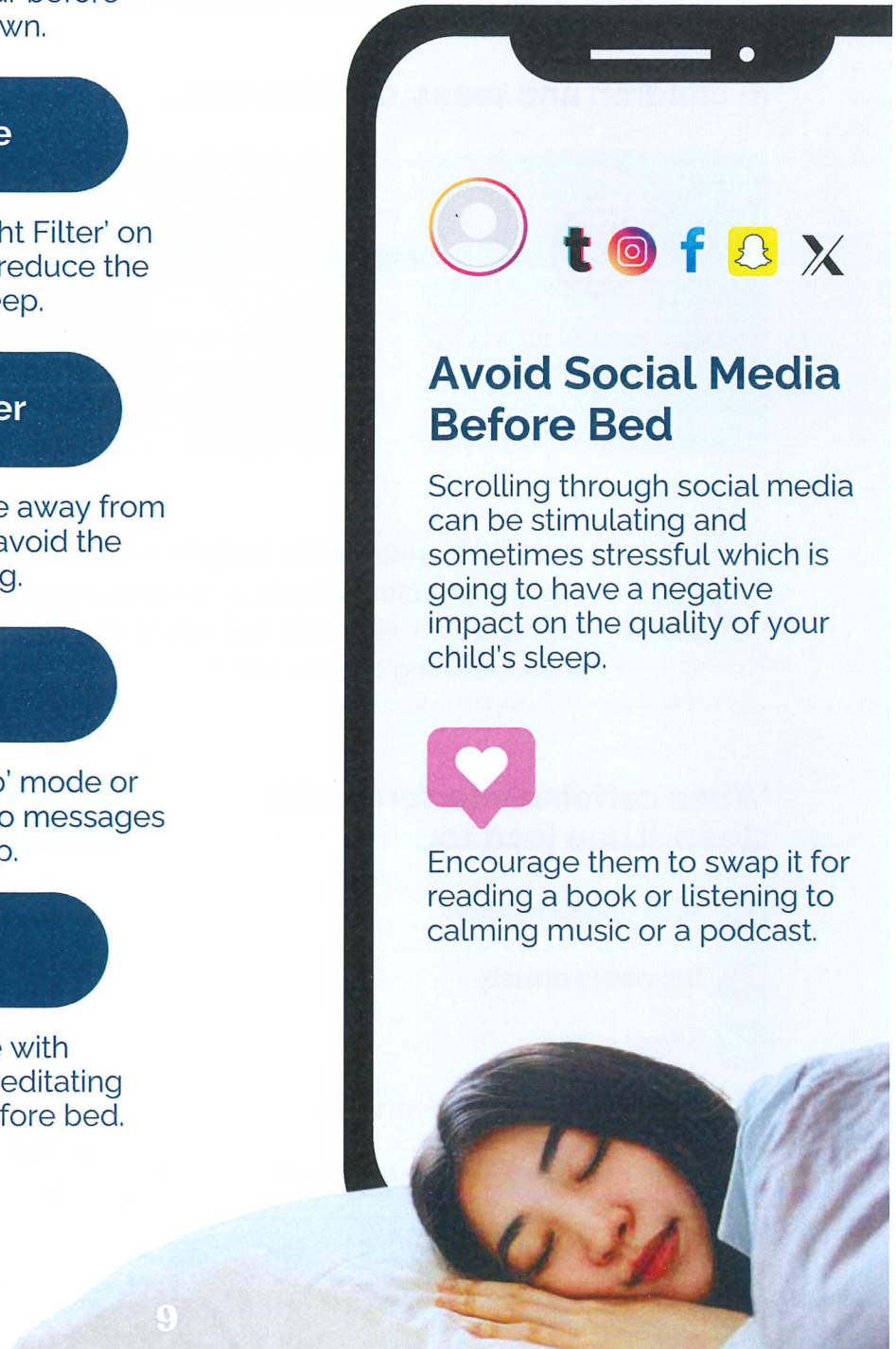


Avoid Social Media Before Bed

Scrolling through social media can be stimulating and sometimes stressful which is going to have a negative impact on the quality of your child's sleep.



Encourage them to swap it for reading a book or listening to calming music or a podcast.



What you need to know about caffeine

Caffeine is present in many food and drink products which your children are consuming. But what you might not realise is how strongly caffeine can disrupt your child's sleep.



How caffeine affects the brain

Caffeine is a stimulant and it blocks a chemical in the brain called adenosine, which helps us feel sleepy. While it might be helpful to make some people feel alert in the mornings, it can cause serious problems with your sleep when it's consumed in the afternoon or evening.

In children and teens, caffeine can...



Caffeine can stay in the body for 6-8 hours, meaning that an energy drink after school can keep your child wired at bedtime. Teenagers are especially vulnerable as their sleep needs are already shifting due to puberty.

When caffeine interferes with sleep, it can lead to:

- ✓ Poor concentration
- ✓ Increased anxiety
- ✓ Mood swings
- ✓ Lower academic performance
- ✓ Greater reliance on more caffeine

What can parents do

- **Know what they're drinking:** Read the labels
- **Set a caffeine curfew:** No caffeinated drinks after 2pm.
- **Offer alternatives:** Flavoured water, fruit teas and smoothies.
- **Talk about it:** Help your child understand the affects of caffeine.

What food and drink contains caffeine that could be affecting my child's sleep?

Fizzy Drinks

Caffeine is a common ingredient found in many sodas and fizzy drinks, especially colas. Often they are consumed in the afternoon and the evening without realising that they can have a negative affect on your sleep.

Energy Drinks

All energy drinks have extremely high levels of caffeine which are often combined with sugar and other stimulants. A typical energy drink can contain anywhere from 80 to over 300 milligrams of caffeine per serving which is much more than what's found in most sodas or even a cup of coffee.

While they may provide a quick energy boost, consuming too much caffeine from energy drinks can lead to side effects such as anxiety, insomnia, rapid heartbeat, or even more serious health issues.

Tea and Coffee

Most forms of tea and coffee will contain a strong level of caffeine, even the one's that are labelled as 'decaf' contain smaller amounts.

Children are more sensitive to caffeine due to their smaller body size and that they metabolise caffeine slower than adults do. If your child is primary aged, try to avoid these drinks altogether, and if you have a teenager who likes to drink tea or coffee, try to limit their consumption to 1 cup per day.

Hot Chocolate

Caffeine in hot chocolate comes naturally from cocoa, with higher levels found in dark chocolate than in milk chocolate. While the caffeine content is much lower than in drinks like coffee, children should still avoid having hot chocolate close to bedtime, as it can interfere with sleep.

Caffeinated Foods

Some foods, like chocolate, energy bars, and certain cereals, contain small amounts of caffeine that can still affect your child's sleep. Even though the levels are low, you should try to avoid your child eating these close to bedtime.

SEND Support

Tailored Advice and Strategies for Sleep Routines

Getting a good night's sleep is essential for every child, but for families with children and young people with SEND, sleep challenges can be more frequent and harder to manage. In this edition of our newsletter, we're focusing on practical advice and supportive strategies to help improve sleep for children with SEND. From creating calming bedtime routines to managing sensory sensitivities and understanding how health needs may affect sleep, we hope these tips offer useful guidance to support both your child's well-being and your own.

What SEND factors can affect my child's sleep?

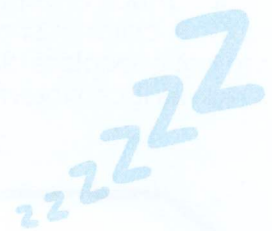
- Communication disorders: do they need help to understand their sleep routine.
- Learning/development delays
- Mobility
- Sensory needs: if they are sensitive in the day, they will be in the evening too.
- Pain
- Visual or hearing impairments: children with this kind of impairment may find a totally dark room disorienting.
- Medication
- Continence
- Night feeds
- Demand avoidance: avoiding bedtime routine.

DID YOU KNOW?

80%

Over 80% of children with SEND experience a sleep problem.

The Sleep Charity



Keep a Sleep Diary

Keeping a sleep diary can be a valuable tool for families of children with SEND to better understand your child's unique sleep patterns and routines. By recording details like bedtime, wake times, night wake ups, and any calming strategies used, families can identify what's working well and where adjustments might help. It's also a clear record that can be easily shared with everyone involved in supporting your child such as co-parents, grandparents, childminders, or health professionals, ensuring everyone stays on the same page.

Exercise

Exercise is a great way to burn energy and help us to feel tired, but exercising too close to bedtime can release feel good hormones (endorphins) and adrenaline which can make us feel more awake. Try to limit physical activity during the hour leading up to bedtime.

Environment

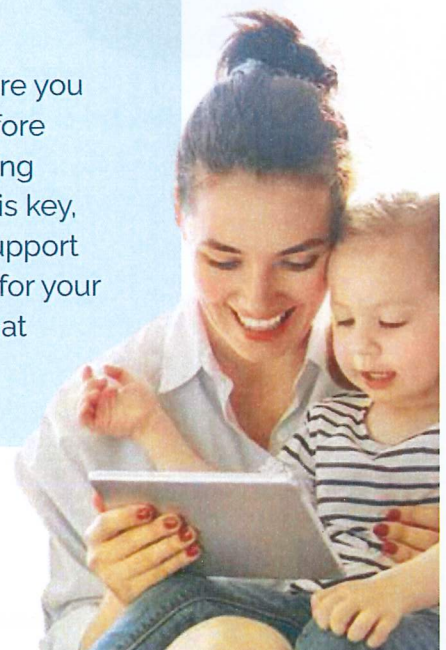
Take into consideration any sensory needs. Completing a sensory checklist can support with establishing the sensory needs of your child.

Screens and Sleep

Screen time is highly stimulating and should be avoided in the hour before bedtime. It also provides a distraction from the bedtime routine and can be an easy way to avoid the demand of the routine.

Behavioural Approach

Improving sleep takes time. It usually takes at least two weeks before you start to see any changes, and sometimes things may feel worse before they get better. Remember, there's no one-size-fits-all routine. Finding what works for your child often involves trial and error. Consistency is key, but it's also important to consider whether you have the time and support at home to maintain a new routine. Make sure it's the right moment for your family, especially if you have upcoming events or other demands that could affect your ability to follow through.



Accessing Further Sleep Support

If your child is struggling with sleep, you're not alone and further support is available. Whether you're just beginning to explore sleep solutions or need tailored support for your child, these links can help you take the next step.



The Sleep Charity

[CLICK HERE >](#)

"We are one of the leading, independent expert voices on sleep issues in the UK and we are here to help everyone get a better night's sleep. Whether it's advice, education or support for children, teenagers, adults, workplaces or professionals, we are on hand with expert knowledge, resources and accredited training."

Teen Sleep Hub

[CLICK HERE >](#)

"The one stop shop for all you need to know about sleep. If you're looking for advice on how to sleep better, would like tips on tweaking your routine or help to understand the science behind your sleep patterns, you'll find it all here."



National Sleep Helpline

[CLICK HERE >](#)

Speak to confidential trained sleep advisors
Available Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays 7pm-9pm
Mondays, Wednesdays 9-11am
excluding Bank Holidays
Call the National Sleep Helpline: 03303 530 541