



Rise and shine! Healthy sleep habits for children

As parents, there are many reasons we don't get enough sleep. Many of us have packed schedules, and may be experiencing lifestyle changes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It's important to know that we deserve a good night's rest! To promote healthy sleep habits in the home, the first step is to reflect on your own sleep.

In children, sleep is especially important. Getting regular, quality sleep helps with:

- Growth and development
- Memory, focus, and learning
- Managing emotions and making social connections
- Maintaining a healthy immune system

The [Canadian 24 Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth](#)

suggest that children ages 5-13 years old sleep 9 to 11 hours each night.

Healthy Children

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Here are a few tips to encourage healthy sleep habits. Remember that we all have different preferences, and some people need more sleep than others. It's up to you to decide what works best for your family.

- **Set clear expectations around bed time.** Encourage each family member to have their own bedtime routine and go to bed and wake up at the same time each day. This means doing the same thing every night, in the same order. Following a bedtime routine encourages the body to relax and release hormones that help with sleep.
- **Consider the environment.** The physical environment includes lighting, noise, temperature, and ambience. Help your child by making the room dark, or ask them if they'd like to try wearing a sleep mask. Some kids might also benefit from headphones with relaxing music, audiobooks, or white noise to block external sound. Keep the bedroom cool at night to promote sleep.
- **Promote positive sleep talk.** Do you often talk about times when you didn't have a good sleep or when you're tired? Reframe these conversations to celebrate times when you've had a great sleep and feel well-rested. Encourage your kids to do the same.
- **Be a positive role model.** Kids who see adults with healthy sleep habits are likely to follow their lead. Reflect on your own sleep habits and consider how you can get a better sleep.

- **Check-in.** Try having regular family check-ins to see how everyone is sleeping and to promote an open dialogue around sleep.
- **Find balance.** Sleep is linked to other health behaviours, such as healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health. Reflect on your daily lifestyle to help your family sleep better. Spending time outdoors can bring a sense of calm and encourage physical activity, which may help with sleeping well.
- **Limit technology.** Some people are spending more time than ever on devices like phones, tablets, and computers. Setting limits around these devices, or not allowing them in the bedroom, may improve sleep. If removing technology completely isn't possible, or if your child uses technology right before bed, they might benefit from dimming the screen brightness or using a blue light filter or wearing blue light filtering eyeglasses.

Healthy sleep helps you and your kids be successful in life. Remember, these changes take time! If you have a setback, try to reflect on why it may have happened, and don't get discouraged!

Speak with a health professional if you or your child have persistent sleep challenges.