



Positive Bedtime Routine

A program for helping your child sleep better

How to create a bedtime routine to help your child sleep better.

Follow these steps for setting a positive bedtime routine

1. **Have a consistent bedtime.** Put your child to bed at the same time each night and wake them at the same time in the morning, even on weekends and holidays. Have your child sleep in the same bed each night.
2. **Follow the same bedtime routine.** Create a nightly routine where your child does the same bedtime activities such as brushing teeth or taking a bath in the same order at the same time. As your child gets used to the routine, they will begin to expect the next task and be more willing to complete it.
3. **Give positive attention for appropriate behavior.** As your child prepares for bed (bath, brushing teeth, changing into pajamas), give them positive attention for appropriate behavior. Ignore inappropriate behavior and go on with the routine, helping your child as needed. For example, if your child is getting undressed for a bath on their own, praise them for the good behavior and talk about other positive things. However, if your child refuses to undress when it is time for their bath, gently guide them through undressing without giving any unnecessary attention. This includes scolding, warnings, reprimands, talking, etc. Do not allow your child to avoid or delay going to bed by engaging in problem behavior or talking or arguing with you.
4. **Use a quiet play time.** After the bedtime tasks are done, tell your child that it is time for a 10 to 15-minute quiet play period. Give your child a few appropriate activities to choose from such as playing a quiet game or reading a book. Use a timer to let your child know when the play period is over. At the end of the playtime, tell your child that it is time to go to sleep. Give your child a choice between getting into bed and having you sit with them for a few minutes, or continuing to play quietly alone. If your child chooses to play alone, leave the room right away. Your child can keep playing quietly in their bedroom. If your child chooses to get into bed, sit quietly with them for a few minutes and read a story or talk, etc. After a few minutes, or if your child changes their mind and decides to play alone, tell your child you are leaving and exit the room without any more talking. If your child chooses play alone time, you can leave and they don't get to ask for parent time again.

To Learn More

- Autism Center
206-987-8080
- Ask your child’s healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child’s nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

5. **Help your child to stay in their room.** Do not attend to your child if they cry after being put to bed or during the night unless you suspect that they are ill or injured. If you must enter your child’s room, do not talk with your child or provide comfort. If your child attempts to leave their room, guide them back to bed in a gentle and neutral manner. Do not give eye contact, comfort or talk with your child during this time. The first few times you use this program, you may have to direct your child back to bed many times. However, if you are consistent and follow through in the beginning, your child should stop trying to leave the room after a few nights.
6. **Reward your child for staying in their room.** If your child doesn’t try to leave their bedroom during the night, reward them with verbal praise and a special activity in the morning (such as playing a quick game with you). Tell your child that they are getting a reward because they stayed in their room through the night.
7. **Schedule naps if needed.** Talk to your child’s doctor or teacher about their need for naps during the day. If needed, make sure to schedule nap times at the same time each day. Limit the amount of time your child naps as much as you can, and finish the nap as early as possible so your child will be tired at bedtime.

Specific Notes for Your Child

Seattle Children’s offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children’s will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children’s. However, your child’s needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child’s healthcare provider.

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