

Getting a good night's sleep



Tips for parent/carers during the Covid-19 lockdown

Nothing looks more peaceful than a sleeping child. Sleep is crucial for everyone but, especially for children, who are developing both mentally and physically. During this lockdown, where there maybe disruptions to sleep and routines here are some tips for parents/carers:

Bedtime Routine

Create a bedtime routine such as showering, brushing teeth, reading a story so your child knows what is coming next. This helps the child to wind-down and be prepared to sleep.

Keep Calm and Sleep

Cortisol 'stress hormone' can impact your child being able to **relax** and sleep.

Ensure before bedtime you do calming activities, dim lighting and the bedtime routine is done calmly to decrease cortisol in your child's system. Wearing comfortable clothing and room being at right temperature (not too cold or hot) also adds to the calm atmosphere.

Set an Individual bedtime/wake up time

There is a lot of variability in sleep needs and patterns in children.

Set regular bedtime(s) for each child to ensure they are sleeping at the right time to wake up refreshed

Set daily wake- up time to ensure they are getting the regular number of hours of sleep

Fears and Worries*

This is scary times for children. You may notice an increase in fears and worries around COVID-19, health and loved ones.

Make a worry list, enough time before bedtime and help problem solve it with your child. at the end of the document.

Focus on calming down

If your child is reluctant to settle down into sleep, take the focus off trying to get to sleep and focus on getting them to relax and settle down. This will allow their brains to shut down and fall asleep.

Screen-free Zone

As mentioned above, mobile phones, tablets and laptop screens produces a blue light that makes the brain think it is daytime and should be awake.

Be sure to turn off all devices an **hour or 30 minutes** before bedtime. Instead, read a favourite or familiar book to get their minds calm and ready for bed.



Click or scan to watch a
video on Worry Time

Sleep Problems

The tips listed above are helpful ways to encourage good sleep hygiene with children. However, if you are concerned that there may be a problem with your child's sleep, you may want more support.

You can speak to your GP or health visitor to begin with. They may refer you to a child psychologist or another expert. Please check out [NHS](#) for more details.

Self-care for Parent/carers

Coronavirus (also known as COVID-19) has brought about change for all of us. We are facing changes to our everyday habits and routines. We may also be experiencing new worries about the health and safety of ourselves and loved ones. Not only that, but many are also being bombarded with new coronavirus related information every day, which can be incredibly confusing. So, it is important that as parents/carers you are well rested when you sleep.

Here are some tips to keep in mind.

Avoid eating heavy, sugary, or spicy meals close to bedtime

Establish a regular bedtime and waking time

If you are in the habit of taking naps, do not exceed 45 minutes of daytime sleep

Avoid excessive alcohol ingestion 4 hours before bedtime, and do not smoke

Exercise regularly, but not right before bed

Use comfortable bedding

Eliminate as much noise and light as possible

Find a comfortable sleep temperature setting and keep the room well ventilated

Create a calm atmosphere in your bedroom for sleep. Avoid, where possible, using your room for work or general recreation

Most importantly, avoid reading news updates, or other stressful information (i.e. work emails) right before bed, as this will raise your fears and worries and disrupt your sleep.

How can I help my child who is feeling anxious?

Many children might be feeling anxious and worried at this time, which may affect their sleep. This is understandable and normal as we are in extraordinary circumstances. In fact, feeling totally relaxed and at ease at all times may not be realistic. If you find that this anxiety and worry is impacting on bedtime or sleep, here are some tips to try and manage this:

Acknowledge your child's feelings. Let them know that their reaction to the times we are in is normal. It is okay to feel worried currently.

Schedule a worry time. Make a dedicated time and space for your child(ren) to talk about fears and worries. Ensure this time is during the day, separate to the bedtime routine. Talking through difficult feelings too close to bedtime can raise anxieties, which can stop your child from feeling sleepy.

Worry Monster/ Worry Jar. If you find that your child(ren) are wanting to talk through their worries at bedtime, it may be helpful to note these on a piece of paper together and put them in a box. Alternatively, you can give them to a Worry Monster or Teddy Bear to look after overnight. Then use the scheduled time the next day to look at the worries together. It is very important that worries are talked through together with a suitable adult so that they are not ignored.

Make it a problem-solving activity. Drawing out your feelings about the situation as a family (using coloured pens and paper) can open conversations and be a good place to start. This also shifts the focus from it being the child's problem to be a shared concern.

Relaxation exercises. Try out some relaxation exercises to try and calm the body down before bed. Deep breathing is an easy one to do before bed. Find a comfortable seat or get them to lay down and together take a deep breath in. Concentrate on how the air feels in your nose. Then slowly, breathe out through your mouth. Repeat as many times as needed. There are fun twists you can add by making buzzzzzzz noises as you breathe out or 'ahhhhh', 'hmmmm

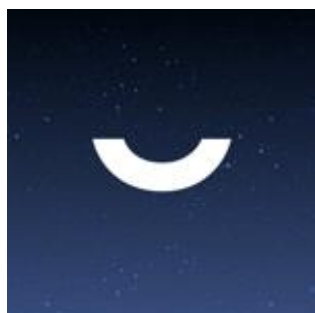


Click or scan to watch a video on Worry Time



Click or scan to watch a video on Deep breathing exercise

Apps designed to help you relax and sleep:



Pzizz



Calm



Sleep Cycle



Stop,
Breathe,
Think

Useful videos

- Ted Ed – [What would happen if you didn't sleep?](#)
- Every Mind Matters - [Tips for Better Sleep](#)
- Dot B – [Beditation Mindfulness Exercise](#)
- The Sleep Council – [10 Commandments of Sleep](#)
- Mind – [Jonny Benjamin's personal story and advice about insomnia](#)

More online sleep support

- [The Sleep Council](#) has a wide range of advice and tools for all ages including a free 30 day sleep plan and downloadable sleep diaries.
- Mind has more advice on [how to cope with sleep problems](#) and a [coronavirus information hub](#) with further support on looking after your wellbeing during the lockdown.
- Every Mind Matters has more [support on sleep](#) and can offer tailored wellbeing advice with their [Mind Plan Quiz](#)
- Evelina London Children's Healthcare have created [Covid-19 specific sleep tips for families](#).
- Audible are offering [free audiobooks for young people](#) while schools are closed.

If you want to talk to someone

[Childline](#) free 1-to-1 chat support and helpline 9am-midnight every day. Call **0800 1111** or visit [childline.org.uk/get-support/](https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/)

[Kooth](#) is an online platform, where anyone aged 11-25 can get support from counsellors until 10pm every day. Visit [kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com)

[The Mix](#) has a free, confidential phone line, web-chat and crisis text line, to help anyone under 25. Call **0808 808 4994**, text **85258** or visit [themix.org.uk](https://www.themix.org.uk)