



## Sleep and Bedtime Routines

- ❖ Routines are important throughout the day and can be especially helpful at bedtime. Getting enough sleep gives children the energy they need to pay attention and learn in school, manage their feelings and behavior, and grow up healthy and strong.
- ❖ Sometimes, it can be hard to get children to go to bed and stay in bed, and some children wake up during the night or have nightmares. You can't *make* your child fall asleep or stay asleep, but bedtime routines can help your child learn good bedtime behavior (and help make your nights more restful too!)
  - Choose a bedtime. There is no one ideal bedtime for children. Of course, it is important to consider your family's schedule, like when parents get home in the evening and how early everyone wakes up in the morning. **Most preschoolers need about 11 to 13 hours of sleep each night.**
  - Be consistent. Once you choose a bedtime, try to be consistent! Your child will learn to accept her/his bedtime if it's the same time every night. It is okay to make exceptions sometimes, but too many changes can make it hard for your child to fall asleep.
  - Help your child get ready for sleep. Include "wind-down time" in your child's bedtime routine, like a bath or bedtime story. For most children, bedtime routines take about 20 minutes, but children who have difficulty falling asleep may need a longer, more soothing routine.
  - Help your child feel calm and safe. If you can, make the room where your child sleeps calm, quiet, and dark (night lights are okay). It helps children feel safe if their parents offer them the same toy or blanket every night.
  - Avoid exciting activities at bedtime. Try to plan the evening so your child does not do anything exciting or high-energy within one hour of bedtime, like running around, "rough housing," watching exciting TV shows or playing videogames. These activities can make it hard for children to settle down and be ready for sleep.
  - Avoid TV at bedtime. If your child watches TV as part of his bedtime routine or falls asleep in front of the TV, this may actually make it harder for her/him to get the sleep she/he needs. If there is a TV in the room where your child sleeps, consider moving it out. TV in the bedroom can make it hard for children to fall asleep and sleep well throughout the night.

**For more information about the Harris Obesity Prevention Effort (HOPE),  
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