

Sleep

Bedtime routine

A good bedtime routine can be the key to a good night's sleep. Babies and children are more relaxed if they know what's coming next, so establishing a routine will help them to relax and fall asleep easily. Stick to your routine as much as you can, even when you're not at home. It can help a child to settle in unfamiliar surroundings. It doesn't matter what you do, so long as you try to keep it the same every night. You might want to include:

- A bath
- Cleaning teeth
- Changing nappies and putting on pyjamas
- Saying goodnight to family members, pets and favourite toys
- Reading a story
- Having a cuddle
- Playing gentle music
- Remember, the bedtime routine can be good for parents too - it's a special time to spend with your child

Trouble staying asleep

If your child has trouble staying asleep, you might try using a 'gro bag' if they are under 3 years old, or a 'mummy bag' or tucking them in tightly with layers of light (not fluffy) blankets if they are older.

Swaddling

If swaddling, only use very thin pure cotton sheets, to reduce the risk of overheating. Please note, regulating your baby/child's temperature is very important, if you have any concerns regarding this matter, please contact your Health Visitor who can offer advice and support.

Sensory strategies

Your child may benefit from trying some of these strategies to help them feel regulated before sleep. Try:

- Avoiding computer games and stimulating videos/DVDs just before bedtime as they alert the brain, making it harder for the child to 'switch off'

- Providing deep pressure prior to bed time, for example, massage, back rubs, bear hugs, rub down with a towel
- Sleeping in a sleeping bag
- Different types of pyjamas, try tighter or looser fitting pyjamas to see what your child prefers
- Check seams for loose threads or labels which may irritate a child's tactile system
- A bed tent to block out distractions, light and noise may help
- A small night light with a warm glow (but not bright enough to cast shadows) if your child is afraid of the dark
- Neutral colour on the walls. Try to limit the visual distractions in the bedroom i.e. busy pictures on the walls, toys and games stacked around the room
- Dark blinds to cut down the light
- Reading in a quiet voice
- Making a small space for the child to sleep in – some children like their bed pushed against the wall so that they can push their bodies against a wall, perhaps with a large teddy or extra pillows pressing against their other side
- Placing the mattress on the floor if your child is afraid of heights
- Organised bedroom – try to keep clean and uncluttered, as clutter can be distracting

Cerebra have lots of advice and support with sleep.

<https://cerebra.org.uk/get-advice-support/sleep-advice-service/>