

Sleep Guide

HOW MUCH SLEEP DOES MY CHILD NEED?

- **Ages 3–5:** 10–13 hours per night
- **Ages 6–9:** 10–12 hours per night
- **Ages 10–12:** 9–11 hours per night

Many behavioral and attention problems in school-age children stem from insufficient sleep.

BUILDING A BEDTIME ROUTINE

- **No screens 1–2 hours before bed.** Blue light from devices suppresses melatonin and shifts your child's internal clock. Start small (15–30 min) and work up from there.
- **Keep devices out of the bedroom.** Even having a phone nearby disrupts sleep. Try an old-fashioned alarm clock for older kids instead.
- **Use a consistent, sequenced routine.** Bath → pajamas → book → lights out, in the same order every night. Predictability reduces bedtime resistance and signals the brain that sleep is coming.
- **Get active during the day.** Daytime physical activity promotes deeper sleep and faster sleep onset at night.
- **No screens at meals either.** This includes background TV — mealtimes without screens support better family connection and healthier habits overall.

SUPPLEMENTS

- Melatonin — best evidence for sleep onset. 0.5–3 mg, 30–60 minutes before bed. Use the lowest effective dose.
- Magnesium glycinate — supports relaxation. Magnesium flake baths also work well for younger children.
- Herbal options — chamomile, passionflower, and valerian are gentle options.

Supplements are supportive tools, not a substitute for a consistent routine and good sleep hygiene. Always consult with your doctor before starting.

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BLUE LIGHT DETOX — GO GRADUAL

Start here:

- Pick just one change to focus on
- Reduce screen time by 30 minutes per week until you hit your goal
- Set designated screen-free blocks during the day
- Make it a family effort — changes stick better together

For older kids (ages 8–12):

- Compare weekly screen-time reports as a family — whoever has the lowest gets to pick dinner or a weekend activity
- Activity trackers give kids a fun incentive to stay moving
- Look at the numbers together — kids are often surprised by how much time adds up

For younger kids (ages 3–7):

- Use a visual chart or sticker system to track screen-free time

WHEN SLEEP IS STILL A SIGNIFICANT STRUGGLE — CHECK FOR MEDICAL CAUSES

- Iron deficiency is linked to restless legs and fragmented sleep. Ask your doctor to check a ferritin level — even levels in the "normal" range can affect sleep.
- Obstructive sleep apnea from large tonsils or adenoids causes snoring, mouth breathing, and restless sleep. Mention any of these signs to your pediatrician.
- Allergies and reflux can disrupt sleep without you realizing it. Nasal congestion, night wakings with discomfort, or back-arching are all worth mentioning.
- Anxiety is a common but underrecognized cause of bedtime resistance and trouble falling asleep. Address fears directly and consider speaking with your team if it persists.