

# Establishing a 'back to school' sleep routine

Sleep routines for children can change a great deal over the long summer holidays. While many kids adjust easily to the school sleep routine, others may benefit from some structured adjustments.

The week before school starts is a perfect time to bring some routine and normality back in preparation for the school year starting. Here's some suggestions:

- 1. Gradually shift the sleep routine.** If your child needs to get up earlier and go to bed earlier during the school term, start by having them up out of bed earlier by 15-30 minutes each day this week. Parents are often tempted to get their kids into bed earlier as a first step. However, we find that advancing the morning rising time can be the best way to go initially, rather than enforcing an early bed time. It is often the case that an enforced earlier bedtime straight away will be met with resistance and can make falling asleep difficult as the body clock is not used to sleeping at this early time straight away.
- 2. Morning sunlight** is a great way to advance the body clock (ie to make falling asleep and getting up happen at earlier times). In combination with tip 1, if your child can have breakfast outside in sunlight or go for some morning exercise, this can really assist. Sunlight turns off melatonin production in the brain and helps us to wake up.
- 3. Consistency.** Once the correct bed time and rising time has been reached, keep it consistent even on the weekend. This will encourage the new timings to stick and to become more natural.
- 4. Wind Down** to create a buffer between the day and the night. Help your child to establish a wind down routine that encourages relaxation and sends a cue to the body and brain that sleep time is approaching. Limit screens in the hour before bed.
- 5. Create a helpful sleep space.** Make sure the bedroom is cool, quiet, and dark. Ideally, no screens in the bedroom.
- 6. Get the day right.** Recipe for good sleep = active, happy, balanced days with good food and time outside.



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