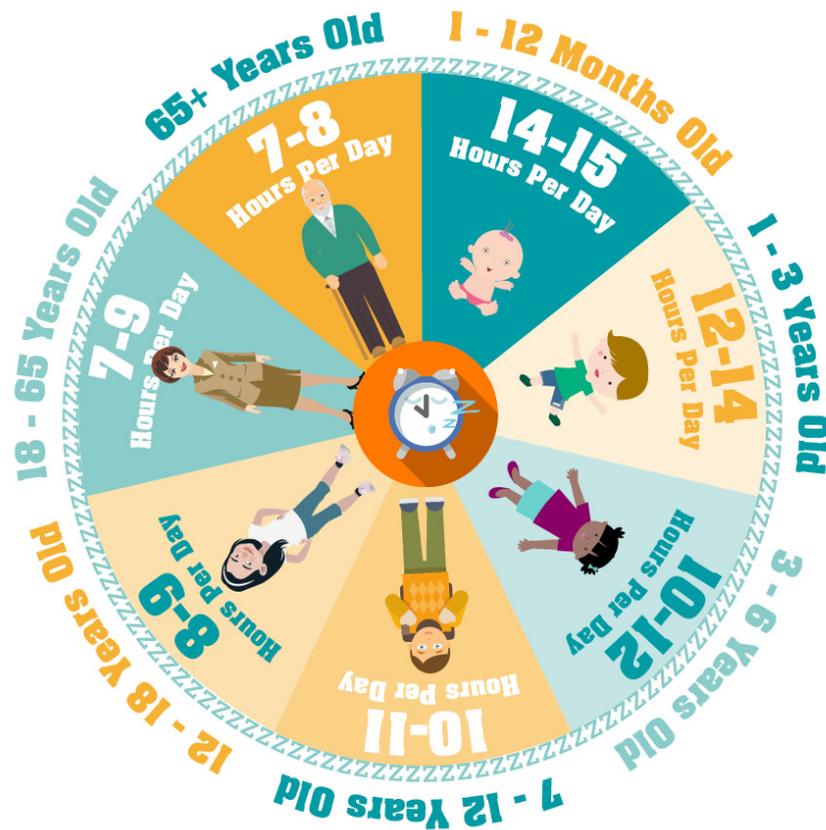


## Suggested Sleep Duration



### Useful websites:

[www.nhs.uk/livewell/sleep](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/sleep)

[www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Childrenssleep](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Childrenssleep)

[www.sleepcouncil.org.uk/](http://www.sleepcouncil.org.uk/)

# Sleep Hygiene

## What is Sleep Hygiene?



'Sleep hygiene' is the term used to describe good sleep habits. Sleep hygiene includes a variety of different practices and habits, which have been proven to help you have a good night time sleep quality and full daytime alertness.

## The Effects of Lack of Sleep

There are many things that can happen when we do not get enough sleep. These include:

- Poor attention, concentration and memory
- Irritability and other issues with mood
- Inaccurate judgement and a slower reaction time
- Poor physical coordination

And in children this could also cause:

- Growth or hormone issues
- Lead to mental health difficulties
- Behavioural issues
- Lowering of the immune system
- Hyperactivity



## Sleep Hygiene Tips



**Establish a Routine** – children with autism respond well to routines because they allow them to feel safe and in control. Establish a basic, ordered routine for the evening. Use [visual timetables](#) to make it easier to follow.

A social story can help explain the need for sleep and reassure the child that they are safe when sleeping alone.

**Exercise** – regular exercise is a good idea but try not to do strenuous exercise in the 4 hours before bedtime. Morning walks are a great way to start the day!

### **Wind down and find a way to relax:**



- a warm (not hot) bath
- read a book
- write 'to do lists' for the next day
- light exercises such as yoga stretches
- listen to relaxing music
- listen to mindfulness breathing clips

- puzzles, colouring in, threading and building with bricks are good tasks for children to complete before bed time

**Keep a sleep diary** – This may highlight issues affecting sleep. If you see your GP or a sleep specialist, they may ask you to complete one of these so preparing one will save time and get answers quicker.

**Medication** - Are you on any medication that could be impacting on your sleep? If this is a possibility then speak to your GP.



## **Make your bedroom sleep-friendly**

- for some children/ young people with autism, their bed or bedroom may simply be a place where they feel comfortable and relaxed



- It is important that the bed and bedroom are quiet and comfortable for sleeping

- a cooler room with enough blankets to stay warm is best

- Some children are exceptionally sensitive to things like light or sound. Dark curtains or black out blinds may help. Thick carpet and earplugs may reduce noise. Consider bed materials and labels!

### **Could there be a physical problem?**

- Do you feel ill, in pain or have another physical problem? If so then visit your GP.

### **Avoid electrical screens**

- Looking at phones, televisions, tablets and computers all stimulate the brain, which makes it harder to relax. Turn them off or put them out of reach an hour before bed.



### **Think about what you eat and drink**

- Try to avoid caffeine and sugary drinks. Also avoid eating just before you go to bed/whilst in bed.



**Getting some sleep yourself** – making your child's room safe can be one of the easiest ways to improve your own sleep. If you know that your child cannot do any harm while you are asleep, it can help you relax.

