

Top tips for tackling sleep

There are many reasons why your child may not be going to sleep or may be waking during the night. Do you recognise any of the following as being an issue for your child?

- **Room temperature** – is your child too hot or too cold? Ideally the temperature in the bedroom should be between 16–18 degrees Celsius.
- **Bedding** – is your child kicking the bedding off during the night and waking because they are cold or are they too hot. Are they sensitive to touch or smell?
- **Comfort** – is their bed comfortable? Try lying on it during the day and seeing how it feels. Is your child wet or soiled? Could this be causing them to wake up?
- **Noise** – is there any noise inside or outside the home that may be disturbing your child? Are they sensitive to noise? Do they need some white fan noise?
- **Light** – is the room dark enough? Or do they need a little bit of light?
- **An over-stimulating bedroom** – does your child get out of bed to play with toys? Are they playing computer games or watching TV before they go to bed? Bright colours are often stimulating to children and make sure they are still interested in the bedroom decorations.
- **Hunger/Thirst** Could your child be hungry or thirsty? What time are they having their tea-time meal? Or is it a distraction technique?
- **Lack of understanding about day and night** – The same sequence of events should happen every night. Visual or other timetables can help a child understand the order of events and what is going to happen next.
- **Lack of routine** – do you have a good bedtime routine for your child? Has their routine become unsettled lately because of an event like a family holiday or Christmas?
- **Getting up too early** – if your child wakes in the night do you treat it as a night awakening, or as the start of the day? You should consider what is a reasonable time to begin the day, and if your child wakes before that time they should be returned back to their bed. This will help to strengthen their body clock.
- **Pain** – is your child in pain? Could they be teething? Some disabled children cannot reposition themselves at night which can disrupt their sleep. If you think that your child may be in pain you should seek advice from medical professionals.
- **Medication** – is your child on any medication that may be impacting on their sleep? Or do they have to be given medication during their sleep which may be disturbing them? Check with a medical practitioner if you are unsure.