

**SLEEP**

**THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP**

Sleep is vital to children’s health, wellbeing, learning and development. It is important to ensure children have the correct amount of sleep so they have enough energy for the next day’s activities.



**FACTS ABOUT SLEEP**



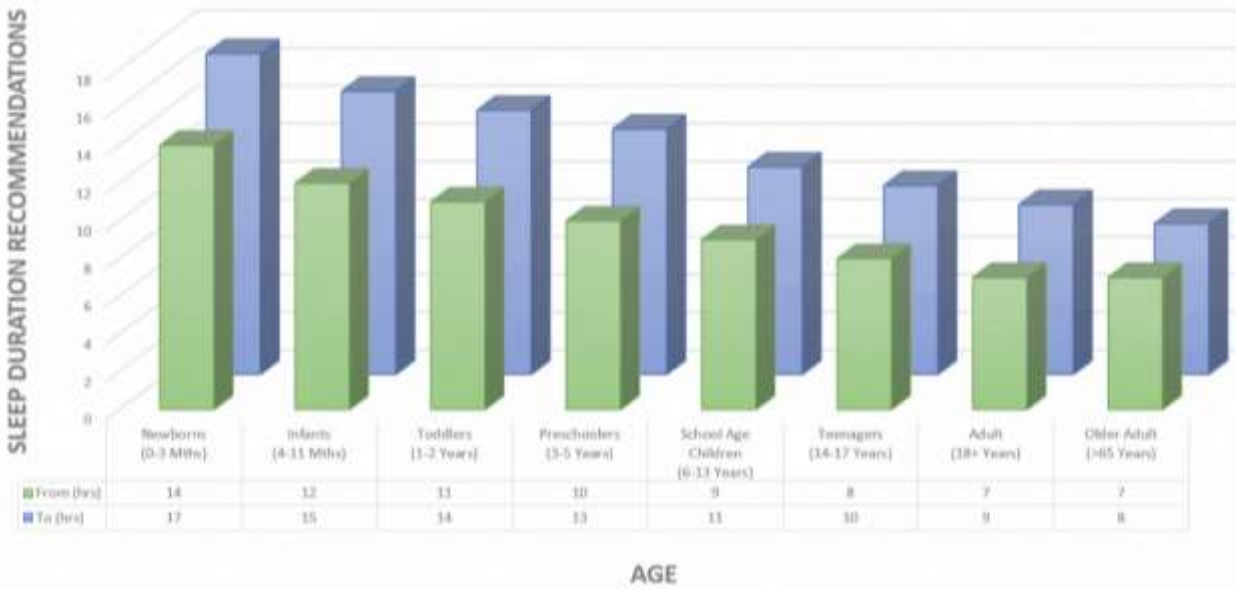
The circadian rhythm or internal ‘body clock’ tells us when to sleep and when to wake up in the morning regulating our sleep pattern. Moving in a 24 hour daily cycle the circadian rhythm responds mainly to daylight.

We all go through sleep cycles; moving through light sleep, deep sleep, dream sleep, waking and then going back to sleep; each of these cycles lasts for approximately 90 minutes.

Brief waking after each cycle is part of a normal sleep pattern.

**QUINE SLEEP DURATION CHART**

Sleep needs change as children get older. It helps to have an idea of how much sleep your child needs as this will be different depending on their age. All children are unique and some will need more or less sleep than others.



Daytime naps can help prevent young children becoming overtired, however these should be scheduled to ensure your child does not have a prolonged nap in the late afternoon which is too close to bedtime.

[Sleep Foundation.org](http://SleepFoundation.org) publish informative, up-to-date research about topics related to sleep and health.

## HOW TO HELP YOU CHILD TO DEVELOP GOOD SLEEP HABITS

When babies are put into bed drowsy but not asleep, they are more likely to learn to 'self-soothe'. This means they will be able to fall asleep independently and also go back to sleep when they wake during the night.

For those who have been soothed until they fall asleep this becomes a habit and they may become dependent on this routine to fall asleep and when they wake during the night.

By establishing a good bedtime routine which helps your child to settle to sleep and to stay asleep will support them to develop a healthy independent sleep pattern.

### During the Day

Encourage your child to be active during the day and spend some of the day outside. This will give them exposure to natural daylight and help them to feel tired at the end of the day with the benefit of a more restful sleep.

### Food and Drink

Encourage a healthy diet with regular meal times. Avoid a large meal too close to bedtime. Having a light snack at bedtime will ensure your child is not hungry and can help them to settle to sleep e.g. a drink of milk and slice of whole-meal toast.

Caffeine has a stimulant effect and can prevent people from feeling tired. Caffeine is found in tea, coffee, chocolate, cola, fizzy drinks and energy drinks. These should always be avoided in the afternoon and evening and should be limited throughout the day.

## BEDTIME

It is important to decide on a bedtime which is suitable for your child's age. Putting them to bed at the same time each night and waking them at the same time each morning; including at weekends will strengthen their body clock and help them to develop a regular sleep and wake cycle.



## The Bedroom

To help your child get a good night's sleep there may be changes you can make within their bedroom. The room should be a comfortable temperature being neither too warm nor too cold. A quiet, dark, calm environment with toys tidied away will encourage sleep. Use a nightlight if your child is frightened of the dark. Where possible reduce any external noise within the household.

### Prepare your Child for Bed - Bedtime Routine

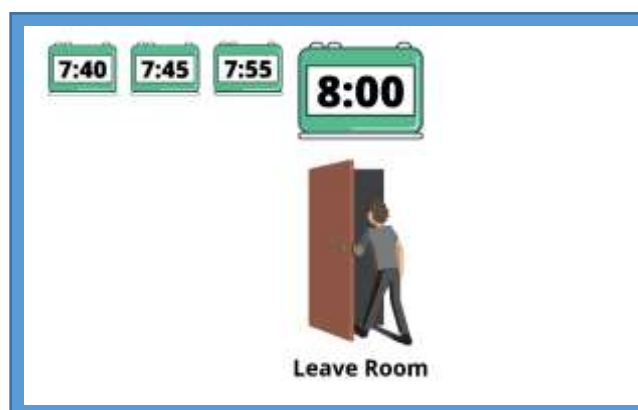
A consistent bedtime routine is important as it teaches your child what to expect in the time leading up to bedtime.

All electronic devices should be turned off at least one hour before bedtime this includes T.V, computers, games consoles and mobile phones. The blue light from screens stimulates brain activity which delays the onset of sleep.

Help them to become involved in a quiet, relaxing activity such as colouring/drawing or building a jigsaw in the lead up to bedtime.

Baths are helpful but only if your child finds them relaxing. Ideally a bath should take place at least 30 minutes before bedtime.

The bedtime routine should last about 20-30 minutes and have an end-point which your child will know means it is time to go to sleep, such as turning out the light and saying goodnight and leaving the room.



## Gradual Stages of Change

If your child will not settle to sleep by themselves and needs you with them this is a useful method of helping them to learn to settle to sleep alone. Rather than leaving your child to cry, you can gradually increase the distance between you and your child over a period of time until they no longer need you beside them to fall asleep. This can take a period of weeks and should begin with you sitting on a chair by the child's bedside and gradually moving the distance of the chair from the bedside until you are able to sit outside the door. If your child wakes you should return to the stage you were at when you had settled your child to sleep.

