

A close-up photograph of a woman with blonde hair, smiling warmly as she holds a baby. The woman's face is in the foreground, looking down at the baby. The baby is wearing a blue and white patterned sweater and is looking towards the camera. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting. The image is split diagonally by a white line from the bottom-left to the top-right.

Norland
Know-Hows
Sleep

Sleep

You will have learned about sleep as part of your course at Norland. The tips below have been collated to help support your practice and to share with the parents you are working with. We hope you find them useful!

1. Set up a bedtime routine

A regular bedtime routine starting around the same time each night encourages good sleep patterns. A routine of bath, story and bed can help younger children feel ready for sleep. For older children, the routine might include a quiet chat with you about the day and then some time alone relaxing before lights-out. Try to keep their bedroom for sleep only.

2. Relax before bedtime

Encourage your child to relax before bedtime. Older children might like to wind down by reading a book, listening to gentle music or practising breathing for relaxation. If your child takes longer than 30 minutes to fall asleep, he/she might need a longer wind-down time before turning the lights out to go to sleep. A warm, but not hot, bath can also help.

3. Keep regular sleep and wake times

Keep your child's bedtimes and wake-up times within one to two hours of each other every day. This helps to keep your child's body clock in a regular pattern. It is a good idea to stick to these times on weekends and holidays, as well as school days. Try to ensure that babies and children go to bed awake and learn to fall asleep by themselves.

4. Keep older children's naps early and short

Most children stop napping at three to five years of age. If your child is over five years and still napping during the day, try to keep the nap to no longer than 20 minutes and no later than early afternoon. Longer and later naps can make it harder for children to get to sleep at night. Keep the routine as similar as possible for naps – try to ensure that all sleep occurs in the same place.

5. Make sure your child feels safe at night

If your child feels scared about going to bed or being in the dark, you can praise and reward them whenever they have been brave. Avoiding scary TV shows, movies and computer games can help too. Some children with sleep phobia may worry about not waking up. A little chat about what to expect in the morning can be calming and reassuring. Some children may find comfort in having a picture of their parents next to their bed, which they can look at if they wake during the night. This helps with the feeling of being kept in mind. Some children also sleep more soundly with an article of clothing from a parent nearby. An item that smells of a parent can provide a calming scent if the child wakes in the night and can support them in self-soothing to get back to sleep. A night light can also be beneficial.

6. Check noise and light in your child's bedroom

A quiet, dimly lit space is important for good sleep. Check whether your child's bedroom is too light or noisy for sleep. Blue light from televisions, computer screens, phones and tablets might suppress melatonin levels and delay sleepiness. It probably helps to turn these off at least one hour before bedtime and to keep screens out of your child's room at night.

7. Avoid the clock

If your child is checking the time often, encourage them to move their clock or watch to a spot where they cannot see it. Gro clocks can be a good way to help children build confidence and independence with sleeping. Ask the child to take the role of setting it each evening.

8. Eat the right amount at the right time

Make sure your child has a satisfying evening meal at a reasonable time. Feeling hungry or too full before bed can make your child more alert or uncomfortable. This can make it harder for them to get to sleep. In the morning, a healthy breakfast helps to kick-start your child's body clock at the right time. If a baby is not sleeping it could be that they are ready to be weaned (if over six months).

9. Get plenty of natural light in the day

Encourage your child to get as much natural light as possible during the day, especially in the morning. Bright light suppresses melatonin. This helps your child feel awake and alert during the day and sleepy towards bedtime.

10. Avoid caffeine

Caffeine is in energy drinks, coffee, tea, chocolate and cola. Encourage your child to avoid these things in the late afternoon and evening, and do not offer them at this time. Cherry juice has been found by the Sleep Charity to raise natural melatonin. A few drops of natural juice in a drink an hour before bedtime can help.

This information is intended to provide guidance only. It is not exhaustive and should not be seen as a substitute for updating or enhancing your knowledge by completing training or a CPD course on the subject.