

BEDTIME TIPS



10 Tips for helping kids with bedtimes:

1. **Play** – is both a de-stressing activity for kids but also an opportunity for them to act out their worries and concerns. It needs to be unstructured free play, even better if it's outdoors with other kids – try the park after school if your backyard is not great or they don't have siblings. It can be stressful for kids to spend all their time in structured, adult-led activities.
2. **Time to talk** – setting aside some one –on-one time before bed allows kids to talk through their worries or just talk about their day. It can be just before lights out time or in the car on way home from school, at dinner table or take an after dinner walk together.
3. **Relaxing evening routine** – try to have no screens an hour before bed as the blue/white quality of the light emitted by screens can reduce the amount of melatonin (a hormone associated with sleep) the brain produces making it harder to fall asleep and affecting the quality of the sleep. Use the hour before bed for quiet games, stories, talking time or other calming activities.
4. **Yoga or stretching** – Stretching and relaxing the muscles can be calming. There are some good sleep time yoga routines available on You Tube to give you some ideas.
5. **Music** – Silence can make it hard for some kids to relax as it allows their minds to focus on their worries. Playing calming music or guided meditation CDs can help kids to have something to focus their mind on.
6. **Using children's stories** - to talk about feelings of worry or specific fears see <http://www.littleparachutes.com/category.php?cid=4> for some book suggestions.
7. **Security objects** – cuddly toys, lucky charms, dad's t-shirt or something sprayed with mum's perfume can help children feel more secure.
8. **Night light** – dimmed, warm-toned lights are less likely to interfere with melatonin production than harsher white or blue toned lights.
9. **Controlled breathing techniques** – practice using deep slow breaths to calm the body and mind, it also gives minds that tend to worry something specific to focus on.
10. **Celebrate behaviour change** – there will be ups and downs and it can be a long road so celebrate the little steps.