

# Developing Good Sleep Habits

## What are common challenges with sleep?

Many children with autism spectrum disorder (or autism) or developmental delays will have challenges around sleep. The most common issues with sleep are:

### GETTING TO SLEEP

(falling asleep easily and without help)

### STAYING ASLEEP

(sleeping through the night without help)

### FALLING ASLEEP AT THE RIGHT TIME AND WAKING UP AT THE RIGHT TIME

## Why is good sleep an important skill to develop?

Overall, children with autism sleep for fewer hours per night than their typically developing peers. Research has shown that poor sleep can not only lead to more behaviours of concern but can also decrease social communication skills. Poor sleep often not only impacts the child themselves but also the whole family.

## Top tips for developing good sleep habits

### Improve daytime habits

– adequate physical exercise, exposure to sunlight and limiting caffeine and daytime naps can help.



### Consistent bedtime routines –

bedtime routines need to occur at the same time and place, and in the same order every night. Use of visual cues (visual schedules) or social stories may help to provide consistency in the bedtime routine.



### Improve night-time habits

– include less stimulating activities 30 minutes before bedtime and decrease exposure to electronic devices before bed.



**Consistent bedtimes** – sleep and wake times should not vary much day to day. There should be no more than an hour's difference in bedtime and wake up times across weekdays and weekends.

### Good sleep environment

– a calm and reassuring environment is required. Cool temperature with minimal light and sounds.



### Decrease or eliminate sleep associations

– try to remove the reliance on an iPad or a parent to be present to fall asleep. Whatever the child uses to go to sleep should be there overnight as well to aid in falling back asleep if they wake up during the night.



If you have any further concerns about your child's sleeping habits please discuss with a member of your clinical team, a health professional or contact CliniKids on (08) 6319 1133.