

How do I help my child function better in the morning?

1. Routine

Children benefit from routine and structure. Decide on a consistent time for your child to wake every day.

For children 5 years old or older allow for approximately 9-10 hours of sleep daily.

For children 3-4 years old or younger allow for approximately 10-11 hours of sleep daily.



2. Include your child in developing the am routine if possible by observing their sensory system

- If your child is able to participate in making decisions for their schedule include them in making the decisions by giving them choices within the schedule.
- Observe your child's typical morning behavior and reaction patterns. Use the questions below to guide your discussion with your child and/or to observe his or her am patterns.
- **How does my child prefer to be woken up?** Does your child prefer to wake up to soft music or voice or to loud (e.g. radio/favorite song, your voice, bell, birds chirping or a specific noise such as a rooster).
- **Does my child function better with a shower in the am or pm?** It is easy to plan showers during the most convenient time; however, they may function better with a shower to either help them fall asleep or help them to wake up ("alert" the sensory system). Consider the temperature of the water (you may want to use luke warm water in the shower in the am to help wake them up, use a cool cloth to wipe their face in the am to "alert" them, or if they are older they may want to splash their face with cool water).
- **What activities help to alert my child** (e.g. rotary swinging or spinning (if your child has a history of seizures rotary swinging/spinning is not recommended), jumping on a mini trampoline, etc. After you are aware of what activities alert your child consider if incorporating 1-2 of these activities into your morning routine would be helpful.
- **Does my child tolerate a vibrating toothbrush?** If not is this something that can be introduced by encouraging use of one for 5 seconds, 10 seconds, 15 seconds and working up to the entire time brushes teeth.

- **Would my child benefit from a visual chart?** (e.g. take pictures of them or yourself completing the different morning activities and place it in sequence with velcro on a laminated paper in a easily accessible place such as the bathroom mirror).
- **Does my child need breakfast first in his or her am routine.** Some children benefit from drinking cold water and/or eating something with protein first thing in the morning. Pay attention to how different foods improve your child's level of alertness.

Consider the following food hints:

1. Protein may help your child to focus and be more comfortable in the morning since he or she hasn't eaten in hours.
2. Crunchy foods are considered to be alerting foods (e.g. consider dry cereal for breakfast rather than with milk, cold drinks rather than warm drinks, etc.)
3. Chewy foods are considered to be organizing foods (e.g. dried fruit)
4. Sucking foods (e.g. oatmeal, yogurt in a tube, etc).

3. Follow through

After you are able to identify a routine that works for your child try to stick with it and encourage your child to complete this routine daily.

Sample Schedule:

- 6:30am alarm clock goes off 7 days a week
- Parent/guardian wipes child's face gently with a cool cloth
- Child eats a protein snack and drinks a cool glass of water
- Encourage child to get out of bed and walk to bathroom (as child gets use to the routine work toward them getting out of bed and washing face with a cool cloth in the bathroom).
- Gets a luke warm shower
- Breakfast (mix of crunchy and chewy food-cereal without milk)
- Brushes teeth with vibrating toothbrush
- Jumps on mini trampoline for 10 minutes
- Child packs book-bag and puts on book-bag (deep pressure will help to calm and focus for school)

How do I help my child go to sleep and sleep through the night?

Establish a Routine that Fits Your Child

Your child will do best with an evening routine so start thinking bedtime from the moment your child comes home from school.

1. Incorporate movement into the evening (sports, trampoline, wheelbarrow, wall push-ups...)
2. Have a set home-work time and a set homework area (preferably not in their bedroom)
3. Consider evening snacks:
 - Crunchy foods are considered to be alerting foods so you may not want to encourage a crunchy snack at the end of the day.
 - Chewy foods are considered to be organizing foods (e.g. dried fruit, granola bars, etc.)
 - Sucking foods (e.g. yogurt in a tube, a warm drink using a straw, etc).
 - Protein may be helpful since your child will go hours without eating through the night
4. Have a set bed-time
5. For children 5 years old or older allow for approximately 9-10 hours of sleep daily.
6. For children 3-4 years old or younger allow for approximately 10-11 hours of sleep daily.
7. Consider air purifiers, air purify plants, and/or hypo-allergenic items

Involve all the senses:

Auditory:

White noise may be helpful to help a child fall asleep and/or throughout the night (e.g. a fan running, waves, rain, Cloud B stuffed animals have white noise incorporated into some of them, etc.)

Proprioception (joint/muscle awareness):

1. Deep pressure is a calming technique some examples that may be incorporated into a bed-time routine 1. Massage (slow, firm and always keeping one hand on child's back)
2. Weighted blanket for a set period of time prior to bed such as during story-time



3. Teach your child to tighten one body part (e.g. right arm first, left arm next) for 5-10 seconds
4. Pillow on either side of child to snuggle them in and give deep pressure to body
5. Observe if your child does better with only sheets on or a sheet, blanket and comforter for more of a deep pressure throughout the night

Vestibular System (balance system):

- Some children benefit from having an indoor swing. Linear swinging is a calming movement.
- Rocking in a rocking chair.

Tactile:

- Warm bath or shower
- Type of pajamas (tight vs loose; cotton vs fleece, tags vs no tags)
- Type of bedding (consider above 400 thread count), cotton or jersey
- Brushing teeth (varying toothbrush types, vibrating toothbrushes are great; however, if unable to tolerate at night due to alerting sensation consider using it only in the am)

Visual:

- Dim lights
- Read by lamp or dimmed overhead light
- Consider room darkening shades
- If your child needs a night-light consider one that is not as bright or a bed toy that lights-up (e.g. Cloud B light-up turtle)
- No TV or computer at least 30 minutes or more prior to bedtime

Olfactory:

Consider aromatherapy (identify calming scents for your child such as lavender or your perfume sprayed on a stuffed animal or pillow)