

# Bedtime Problems

---

**Children benefit from the structure of limits that you set for them. Limits relieve (not cause) anxiety in children.**

---

Getting a child to go to bed is a common problem for many parents. Some children use stalling and excuses to resist going to bed, whereas others go to bed but do not stay there. Bedtime can be one of the most trying parts of a parent's day. Bedtime problems can occur at any age but are most common between 3 and 6 years.

---

## What can you do to help your child go to bed?

First of all, it is important to realize that you cannot “make” a child go to sleep. However, you can help your child improve their bedtime behavior and help them to get to sleep more easily and quickly. As with many other skills your child needs to learn, this will take time.

---

## Create the bedtime plan

---

### Stick to firm bedtime limits

- Believe that setting and sticking to firm bedtime limits is best for everyone, especially your child.
  - Setting limits is an important part of parenting. Children do not have a lot of self-control yet, and so they benefit from the structure of limits that you set for them. This helps them to learn self-control. Also, limits relieve (not cause) anxiety in children.
  - Prepare yourself for some hard work. Changing behavior is always difficult. Your child is probably happy with bedtime the way it is and so will initially have little motivation to change. You need to be consistent and persistent.
- 

### Explain the new rules to your child

- Before you start the new nighttime program, sit down with your child during the day and let them know what you expect.
  - Do not make your conversation too long or involved and do not over explain.
  - Ignore any negative comments by your child and avoid arguing about the new rules.
- 

### Set bedtime

- Decide on your child's bedtime and be consistent about it.
  - Set a regular bedtime to help set your child's internal clock.
  - Be sure that your child is ready for sleep before putting them to bed. This may seem obvious, but sometimes parents set a bedtime for their own convenience. Some children's biological clocks make them more likely to be “night owls.” These children may have difficulty with an earlier bedtime.
- 

### To Learn More

- Pulmonary and Sleep Medicine  
206-987-5072
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- [seattlechildrens.org](http://seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

### Bedtime fading

Putting children to bed when they are not tired increases the likelihood of bedtime struggles. For some children it is best to start by setting the bedtime at the time they usually fall asleep and gradually make (fade in) the bedtime earlier. To start this:

- First determine when your child is naturally falling asleep and set this as their temporary bedtime. If you would like your child to go to bed at 8:30, but they usually do not fall asleep until 10:30, choose 10:30 as their temporary bedtime to start.  
This will make it easier to teach your child how to fall asleep within a short time of getting into bed.
- Once your child is falling asleep easily and quickly at their temporary bedtime then you can start making their bedtime earlier by 15 minutes every few days.
- Be patient. If you move the bedtime back too quickly, you may have problems with your child not being able to fall asleep.

---

### Bedtime routine

Establish a consistent bedtime routine.

- Choose calm and enjoyable activities, such as a bath and bedtime stories.
- Avoid stimulating high-energy activities, such as playing outside, running around, or watching exciting television shows or videos.
- Having the last part of the bedtime routine be a favorite activity will help motivate your child to get ready for bed.
- Make a chart of your bedtime routine to help keep your child on track.

---

### Ignore complaints or protests

Ignore your child's complaints or protests about bedtime, such as not being tired. Discussing or arguing about bedtime will lead to a struggle with your child, thus maintaining bedtime problems. Firmly and calmly let your child know it is time for bed and continue with the routine.

---

### Putting your child to bed

When the bedtime routine is complete, put your child to bed and leave the room. It is important that you leave the room while your child is awake, as this helps your child learn to fall asleep on their own.

---

### If your child cries or yells

- If your child is yelling or calling out to you but remaining in their bed, remind them one time that it is bedtime.
- If your child continues to be upset, check on them. Wait for as long or short a time as you wish. For some children, checking frequently is effective; for others, checking infrequently works better.
- Continue returning to check on your child as long as they are crying or upset.
- The visits should be brief (1 minute) and boring.
- Don't soothe or comfort your child during these visits and don't get into a discussion. Calmly tell your child that it's time to go to sleep. The purpose of returning to the room is to reassure your child that you are still present and to reassure you that your child is OK.

## Bedtime Problems

---

### If your child gets out of bed or comes out of their room

- If your child gets out of bed or comes out of their room, firmly and calmly return them to bed. For some children, simply returning them to bed multiple times works. For others, letting them know that if they get up again you will close the bedroom door can be effective.
- If your child gets out of bed, put them back in bed and close the door for a brief period (1 minute to start).
- After the allotted time, open the door.
- If your child is in bed, praise them and leave the door open. If they are up, put them back in bed and close the door again but leave it closed for a longer time, increasing the time by a few minutes each time he gets up.

### Don't lock your child in their room

Locking the door may be scary for your child. The goal is to teach your child to stay in bed, not punish or scare them.

### Reward your child

- Soon after your child awakens in the morning, reward them for what they did well the night before.
- Don't dwell on misbehavior from the previous night.
- Give your attention to your child's successes. Stickers, praise, and breakfast treats are good ways to reward your child for even small improvements.

### Be consistent and don't give up

The first few nights are likely to be very challenging. You should start to see major improvements within the first few weeks.

### Try not to lose your temper

Although it is natural to feel angry when your child misbehaves or won't cooperate at bedtime, try to remain cool and calm. Your goal is to make bedtime a positive and secure time of the day for your child.

©Mindell JA & Owens JA (2003). A Clinical Guide to Pediatric Sleep: Diagnosis and Management of Sleep Problems. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. Used with permission.

## Guidelines for Average Hours of Sleep

### Age of child                      Hours of Sleep Each Day

Birth to 3 months ...	16 hours
6 to 12 months .....	13 to 14 hours
1 to 3 years .....	12 hours
3 to 5 years .....	11 to 12 hours
5 to 12 years .....	10 to 11 hours
Adolescence .....	8.5 to 9.5 hours

Owens, J. (2006) Pediatric Insomnia, Sleep Medicine Clinics, v1, issue 3

---

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201. This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

© 2020 Seattle Children's, Seattle, Washington. All rights reserved.

7/20  
PE1067

# Los problemas a la hora de acostarse

**Para los niños, fijar una estructura con límites es muy beneficioso. Los límites calman (no causan) la ansiedad en los niños.**

Es común que muchos padres tengan problemas a la hora de acostarse a la noche. Algunos niños tratan de atrasar el momento, poner excusas o se resisten, mientras que otros se acuestan, pero no se quedan en la cama. La hora de acostarse puede ser uno de los momentos más frustrantes y problemáticos del día para los padres. Estos problemas pueden ocurrir a cualquier edad, pero son más comunes entre los 3 y 6 años.

## ¿Qué se puede hacer para que su niño se acueste?

En primer lugar, es importante tener en cuenta que usted no puede hacer que un niño se duerma. Sin embargo, puede ayudarlo a mejorar su comportamiento a la hora de acostarse y que pueda conciliar el sueño más fácil y rápidamente. Al igual que para aprender otras cosas, su niño necesitará tiempo.

## Cómo planear la hora de acostarse

### Sea constante con las reglas a la hora de acostarse

- El primer paso es convencerse de que su hijo necesita cambiar su comportamiento a la hora de acostarse y que establecer una estructura con límites firmes es para el bien de todos, especialmente el de su hijo.
- Establecer límites es una parte importante de la tarea de los padres. Los niños aún no tienen mucho autocontrol y es por eso que es beneficioso imponer una estructura con los límites que usted decida y que ayuden a aprender autocontrol. Además, los límites calman (no causan) la ansiedad en los niños.
- Por último, prepárese para una tarea grande. Siempre es difícil cambiar el comportamiento. Probablemente su niño está contento con la situación actual a la hora de acostarse y al principio no le interesará el cambio. Usted debe ser constante y persistente.

### Explique las nuevas reglas a su niño

- Antes de comenzar el nuevo plan para acostarse, hable con su niño en algún momento del día y explíquele cómo será.
- Su explicación no debe ser muy larga, detallada ni demasiado explicativa.
- Ignore los comentarios negativos y evite las discusiones acerca de las nuevas reglas.

### Fije la hora de acostarse

- Decida cuál es la hora de acostarse y sea constante.
- Acostarse todos los días a una hora fija regula el reloj interno de su hijo.

### Más información

- Neumología y Medicina del Sueño  
206-987-5072
- Consulte con el proveedor de atención médica de su niño
- [seattlechildrens.org](http://seattlechildrens.org)

### Servicio gratuito de intérprete

- En el hospital, solicítelo a la enfermera.
- Fuera del hospital, llame a la línea gratuita de interpretación: 1-866-583-1527. Menciónele al intérprete el nombre de la persona o extensión que necesita.

- Asegúrese de que tenga sueño antes de acostarse. Esto puede parecer obvio, pero hay veces que los padres fijan la hora de acostarse de acuerdo con su propia conveniencia. Hay casos en que el reloj biológico de algunos niños los convierte en "noctámbulos", para ellos puede ser difícil acostarse más temprano.

---

### Cambio gradual de la hora de acostarse

Cuando los niños se acuestan antes de que tengan sueño es más probable que se resistan. Por eso, para algunos niños es mejor comenzar con la misma hora de acostumbre y cambiarla poco a poco. Para comenzar:

- Primero hay que saber a qué hora su niño se duerme solo y, por un tiempo, esta será su hora de ir a la cama. Si desea que su niño se acueste a las 8:30, pero generalmente se duerme a las 10:30, 10:30 será la hora de acostarse temporalmente. De esta manera, será más fácil que aprenda a quedarse dormido al poco tiempo de acostarse.
- Una vez que se duerma fácil y rápidamente a esa hora, se puede empezar a hacer cambios de 15 minutos cada cierto tiempo. Sea paciente. Si hace los cambios de horario muy seguidos, puede tener problemas para que su niño se duerma.

---

### La rutina antes de acostarse

Establezca una rutina constante para la hora de acostarse.

- Esta rutina debe ser con actividades tranquilas y agradables, como bañarse y leer cuentos.
- Evite las actividades enérgicas que produzcan agitación como jugar, correr, ver televisión o videos.
- Si la última parte de la rutina es una actividad que al niño le gusta mucho, será buena motivación para prepararse para la cama.
- Puede crear un cuadro para que sea más fácil seguir una rutina a la hora de acostarse.

---

### Ignore las quejas o las protestas

Ignore las quejas o protestas a la hora de acostarse, como no tener sueño. Negociar o discutir a qué hora hay que acostarse lleva a problemas. Con firmeza y calma, repita que es hora de acostarse y continúe con la rutina.

---

### Para acostar al niño

Cuando termine la rutina, acuéstelo y salga de la habitación. Es importante que salga de la habitación mientras el niño está despierto para que aprenda a dormirse solo.

---

### Si el niño llora o grita

- Si su niño grita o llama, pero se queda en la cama, recuérdelo una sola vez que es hora de dormir.
- Si sigue enojado, acérquese a la cama. Quédese el tiempo que mejor le parezca, mucho o poco. Para algunos niños, por su cama con cierta frecuencia funciona bien. Para otros es mejor hacerlo con menos frecuencia. Continúe haciéndolo mientras lllore o esté enojado. Las visitas deben ser breves (1 minuto) y aburridas.
- Durante estas visitas no lo calme, no lo consuele ni discuta. Dígale con calma que es hora de dormir. El propósito de volver a la habitación es tranquilizarlo, que sepa que no se ha ido y asegurarse de que su hijo está bien.

### Qué hacer si el niño se baja de la cama o sale de la habitación

- Si su hijo se baja de la cama o sale de la habitación, regréselo a la cama con calma y firmeza. Para algunos niños esto da resultado simplemente haciéndolo varias veces. Para otros, decirles que si levantan otra vez cerrará la puerta del dormitorio puede ser más efectivo.
- Si su niño se vuelve a levantar de la cama, regréselo y cierre la puerta por un tiempo corto (1 minuto para comenzar). Después de ese tiempo, ábrala y si su niño sigue en la cama, elógielo y deje la puerta abierta. Si se levanta, acuéstelo y cierre la puerta otra vez. Aumente el tiempo con la puerta cerrada cada vez que se levanta.

### No deje al niño encerrado en la habitación

Encerrarlo para que no se salga puede asustarlo. El objetivo es enseñarle a quedarse en la cama, no castigarlo ni asustarlo.

### Recompense a su niño

- En la mañana, cuando se despierta, dele un premio por lo que hizo bien la noche anterior y olvide el mal comportamiento. Enfóquese y recompense sus éxitos, por pequeños que sean, con calcomanías, elogios y algo especial para el desayuno.

### Sea constante y no se rinda

Es probable que en las primeras noches sea muy difícil. En pocas semanas debe comenzar a notar cambios importantes.

### Trate de no perder el control

- Aunque es natural enojarse cuando su hijo se porta mal o no coopera a la hora de acostarse, mantenga la calma. La meta es que, para su niño, la hora de acostarse sea un momento positivo y tranquilo.

©Mindell JA & Owens JA (2003). A Clinical Guide to Pediatric Sleep: Diagnosis and Management of Sleep Problems (Una guía clínica para el sueño pediátrico: diagnóstico y manejo de los problemas del sueño). Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. Usado con autorización.

### Guía de horas promedio de sueño

Edad del niño	Horas de sueño al día
De recién nacido a 3 meses ...	16 horas
6 a 12 meses .....	13 a 14 horas
1 a 3 años .....	12 horas
3 a 5 años .....	11 a 12 horas
5 a 12 años .....	10 a 11 horas
Adolescencia .....	8.5 a 9.5 horas

Owens, J. (2006) Pediatric Insomnia, Sleep Medicine Clinics, v1, issue 3



# Bedtime Problems

---

**Children benefit from the structure of limits that you set for them. Limits relieve (not cause) anxiety in children.**

---

Getting a child to go to bed is a common problem for many parents. Some children use stalling and excuses to resist going to bed, whereas others go to bed but do not stay there. Bedtime can be one of the most trying parts of a parent's day. Bedtime problems can occur at any age but are most common between 3 and 6 years.

---

## What can you do to help your child go to bed?

First of all, it is important to realize that you cannot “make” a child go to sleep. However, you can help your child improve their bedtime behavior and help them to get to sleep more easily and quickly. As with many other skills your child needs to learn, this will take time.

---

## Create the bedtime plan

---

### Stick to firm bedtime limits

- Believe that setting and sticking to firm bedtime limits is best for everyone, especially your child.
  - Setting limits is an important part of parenting. Children do not have a lot of self-control yet, and so they benefit from the structure of limits that you set for them. This helps them to learn self-control. Also, limits relieve (not cause) anxiety in children.
  - Prepare yourself for some hard work. Changing behavior is always difficult. Your child is probably happy with bedtime the way it is and so will initially have little motivation to change. You need to be consistent and persistent.
- 

### Explain the new rules to your child

- Before you start the new nighttime program, sit down with your child during the day and let them know what you expect.
  - Do not make your conversation too long or involved and do not over explain.
  - Ignore any negative comments by your child and avoid arguing about the new rules.
- 

### Set bedtime

- Decide on your child's bedtime and be consistent about it.
  - Set a regular bedtime to help set your child's internal clock.
  - Be sure that your child is ready for sleep before putting them to bed. This may seem obvious, but sometimes parents set a bedtime for their own convenience. Some children's biological clocks make them more likely to be “night owls.” These children may have difficulty with an earlier bedtime.
- 

### To Learn More

- Pulmonary and Sleep Medicine  
206-987-5072
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- [seattlechildrens.org](http://seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.



### Bedtime fading

Putting children to bed when they are not tired increases the likelihood of bedtime struggles. For some children it is best to start by setting the bedtime at the time they usually fall asleep and gradually make (fade in) the bedtime earlier. To start this:

- First determine when your child is naturally falling asleep and set this as their temporary bedtime. If you would like your child to go to bed at 8:30, but they usually do not fall asleep until 10:30, choose 10:30 as their temporary bedtime to start.  
This will make it easier to teach your child how to fall asleep within a short time of getting into bed.
- Once your child is falling asleep easily and quickly at their temporary bedtime then you can start making their bedtime earlier by 15 minutes every few days.
- Be patient. If you move the bedtime back too quickly, you may have problems with your child not being able to fall asleep.

---

### Bedtime routine

Establish a consistent bedtime routine.

- Choose calm and enjoyable activities, such as a bath and bedtime stories.
- Avoid stimulating high-energy activities, such as playing outside, running around, or watching exciting television shows or videos.
- Having the last part of the bedtime routine be a favorite activity will help motivate your child to get ready for bed.
- Make a chart of your bedtime routine to help keep your child on track.

---

### Ignore complaints or protests

Ignore your child's complaints or protests about bedtime, such as not being tired. Discussing or arguing about bedtime will lead to a struggle with your child, thus maintaining bedtime problems. Firmly and calmly let your child know it is time for bed and continue with the routine.

---

### Putting your child to bed

When the bedtime routine is complete, put your child to bed and leave the room. It is important that you leave the room while your child is awake, as this helps your child learn to fall asleep on their own.

---

### If your child cries or yells

- If your child is yelling or calling out to you but remaining in their bed, remind them one time that it is bedtime.
- If your child continues to be upset, check on them. Wait for as long or short a time as you wish. For some children, checking frequently is effective; for others, checking infrequently works better.
- Continue returning to check on your child as long as they are crying or upset.
- The visits should be brief (1 minute) and boring.
- Don't soothe or comfort your child during these visits and don't get into a discussion. Calmly tell your child that it's time to go to sleep. The purpose of returning to the room is to reassure your child that you are still present and to reassure you that your child is OK.

## Bedtime Problems

---

### If your child gets out of bed or comes out of their room

- If your child gets out of bed or comes out of their room, firmly and calmly return them to bed. For some children, simply returning them to bed multiple times works. For others, letting them know that if they get up again you will close the bedroom door can be effective.
- If your child gets out of bed, put them back in bed and close the door for a brief period (1 minute to start).
- After the allotted time, open the door.
- If your child is in bed, praise them and leave the door open. If they are up, put them back in bed and close the door again but leave it closed for a longer time, increasing the time by a few minutes each time he gets up.

### Don't lock your child in their room

Locking the door may be scary for your child. The goal is to teach your child to stay in bed, not punish or scare them.

### Reward your child

- Soon after your child awakens in the morning, reward them for what they did well the night before.
- Don't dwell on misbehavior from the previous night.
- Give your attention to your child's successes. Stickers, praise, and breakfast treats are good ways to reward your child for even small improvements.

### Be consistent and don't give up

The first few nights are likely to be very challenging. You should start to see major improvements within the first few weeks.

### Try not to lose your temper

Although it is natural to feel angry when your child misbehaves or won't cooperate at bedtime, try to remain cool and calm. Your goal is to make bedtime a positive and secure time of the day for your child.

©Mindell JA & Owens JA (2003). A Clinical Guide to Pediatric Sleep: Diagnosis and Management of Sleep Problems. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. Used with permission.

## Guidelines for Average Hours of Sleep

### Age of child                      Hours of Sleep Each Day

Birth to 3 months ...	16 hours
6 to 12 months .....	13 to 14 hours
1 to 3 years .....	12 hours
3 to 5 years .....	11 to 12 hours
5 to 12 years .....	10 to 11 hours
Adolescence .....	8.5 to 9.5 hours

Owens, J. (2006) Pediatric Insomnia, Sleep Medicine Clinics, v1, issue 3

---

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201. This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

© 2020 Seattle Children's, Seattle, Washington. All rights reserved.

7/20  
PE1067