



Coping With the Clock Change

Top Tips from Millpond Children's Sleep Clinic

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The calming, charming CBeebies series In the Night Garden, broadcast every day in the Bedtime Hour, has become a regular part of the run-up to their bedtime routines for many children. According to research commissioned on behalf of the programme and the In the Night Garden magazine, when the clocks change almost a third of all children will wake up an hour earlier, while many parents struggle to get their children to bed at night.

Knowing how important the right amount of sleep is for children's well-being and development, we asked Mandy Gurney, Founder of Millpond Children's Sleep Clinic, to share her top tips on how best to adjust your child's body clock and establish an effective bedtime routine.



Tip 1. Reset your child's body clock

In order to gradually reset your child's body clock start by pushing their bedtime back by 15 minutes later a couple of weeks before the clocks change. Repeat this for three or four nights and then push it back by another 15 minutes. Continue with this pattern until bedtime is an hour later than usual. You will also need to move the start of their bedtime routine, nap times and just as importantly meal times. Eating and sleeping go hand in hand with regulating our circadian rhythms so it is vital you change meal times too.

The sleep hormone melatonin regulates the body clock and makes you drowsy. As exposure to light inhibits its production, getting children to play outdoors in the afternoon helps in keeping them up a bit later.

Tip 2. Let there be light



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Start preparing your child for bed by winding down in the half hour or so before beginning their bedtime routine. Relaxing activities such as watching a soothing programme like In the Night Garden, or the reading the In the Night Garden Bedtime Book, will help get them in the mood for going to sleep – but make sure to limit their screen time, turning off all TVs, tablets and computers an hour before bed, as research has shown that light from screens can interfere with melatonin production.

**Tip 3.
Relax**

**Tip 4.
Is it time
to get
up yet?**

Give your child a signal to let them know it's morning and they can now get up and play by using a sleep aid product like the Igglepiggle Sleep Tight All Night toy or by setting up a simple low-watt bulb light on a timer switch in their room, and explain that they must stay in bed until the light comes on. Each time you move bedtime back by 15 minutes, also set the light to come on 15 minutes later; coordinating this helps your child to adapt more easily. Initially you may have to stay in the room with them, but roundly praising them when they do stay in bed later should encourage them to adjust.

As you push back bedtime and getting up, also delay your child's morning milk and breakfast by 15 minutes every few days. They'll then be less likely to wake early expecting food – but if they do, avoid the temptation to feed them in the hope they'll go back to sleep as you will probably just set up bad habits for the future.

**Tip 5.
Good
Start**





Get your routine right

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Establish a regular routine for your child's bedtime preparations that begins about 30-40 minutes before they go to bed. Making sure you do the same things in the same order and the same way every night means that your child's body will start to prepare for sleep as soon as you start this process. This bedtime ritual is especially important when you are adjusting their bedtime to help with the clock change.

Warm Bath

A warm bath will help relax your child, but don't make this play time in case it over stimulates them. Keep it quite short – no more than 10 minutes – and follow it by washing hands and brushing teeth before going straight to the bedroom. Avoid going back into your living area to ensure you keep the focus and magic of your bedtime ritual.

Dress for Bed

Make sure all your child's night clothes are readily accessible in the bedroom so there's no delay in getting them dressed and into bed.

Lighting

Keep the bedroom lights dimmed once bath-time is over to help with the production of the sleep hormone melatonin.

Story Time

Read a brief story or two, or sing a gentle lullaby; then, after a cuddle and a goodnight kiss, tuck them in with their favourite soft toy to keep them warm and cosy.

Time Alone

Your child needs to learn to fall asleep independently so once they are drowsy, leave the bedroom; they should be asleep within 15 minutes.



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Bedtime Routine Reward Chart



Colour the star when you have completed each step of your bedtime routine.

This reward chart belongs to

.....

.....

I had a bath

Splish Splash!

I put on my pyjamas

Time for bed Igglepiggle!

I got in to bed nicely

Goodnight Upsy Daisy!

I brushed my teeth

All clean!

I listened to a bedtime story

Goodnight Everybody!