

Suresh Kotogal, M.D.
Pediatric neurologist
Mayo Clinic Children's Center

Sleep transcript

Wake Up Time

“Shifting the morning wake up time. That’s the best one to manipulate. Don’t worry about the time to go to sleep at night, but just work on the morning wake up time and everything else will take place on it’s own. But if the morning wake up time is at 11 am then move it every 3 or 4 days by about a half hour so make it 10:30, then 10:00 am then 9:30, so moving it backwards step-by-step would be a good thing.”

Set the Biological Clock

"When the child wakes up have them exposed to a flood of light, sunlight these days is very good because the sunlight exposure immediately upon awakening also helps to set the biological clock, the brain, and the other thing is that children should avoid any napping during the day so that way they build up their sleep pressure, and if they build up their sleep pressure during the day they'll be able to fall asleep quicker at night as well."

No electronics

"I think it's a good idea to avoid exposure to electronic media in the half hour or hour prior to bedtime. People used to say two hours but I think it's really very hard to have a child stay away from electronic media for two hours, but certainly I think for about a half hour to an hour before bedtime avoiding anything electronic."

Bed Only for Sleeping

"The bed for a child is only to sleep in, if they want to read or if they want to work on their computer or chat with their friend, they should do that sitting in a chair in their room, but not the bed because that dilutes the meaning of the bed in the child's mind."

Worrying Before Bed

"Some children have lots and lots of worries or things on their mind. For those kids its probably a good idea to keep a little diary. You should write down all their fears, worries, to do items in the diary and they should do this about 2 to 2 ½ hours prior to the desired bedtime."

How Electronics Disrupt

"The light that is emitted by the electronic device may also suppress melatonin secretion. Melatonin is the sleep-inducing hormone that is secreted by the brain and it is very sensitive to even low quantities of light, low intensities of light so the light from an electronic device may suppress melatonin secretion."