



# Establishing Healthy Bedtime Routines

Bedtime calls an ending to the day and for little ones this means a separation from you. This anxiety is one of the main reasons that children can find going to sleep difficult. Having a good and consistent bedtime routine of three or four activities, for example, brushing teeth, having a bath, putting on pyjamas, and reading a book can help children feel more comfortable and calmer at bedtime. Research shows that children who follow bedtime routines are more likely to go to sleep earlier, take less time falling asleep, sleep longer, and wake up less during the night.

## How to create a healthy bedtime routine:

- **Start early**- Try to establish your bedtime routine when your child is still a baby. Consistency is key for building confidence and as your child grows, it will be easier to keep up healthy habits that they are used to.
- **Shift your mindset**- The key part of a bedtime routine is to make each step an opportunity for connection between you and your child, rather than a list of chores to complete. Find your playful side, sing, get silly and make these moments important parts of connecting before you say goodnight.
- **Keep it short**- A good bedtime routine lasts around 45 minutes and prolonging the routine can delay bedtime. Adjust when you start the routine depending on your child's sleepy cues, e.g., if your child never falls asleep before 8pm start the routine at 7pm at the earliest.
- **Listen to your child**- Try offering your child some control over the routine for example, give a choice between bath vs shower, what pyjamas they wear or what story you read.



Dr Martha Deiros Collado  
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If a part of the bedtime routine isn't working, listen to your child and adapt the routine if necessary. Some children need more physical activity rather than quiet time so instead of reading a story, try some child friendly yoga before getting in bed. Respond to what works best for them.

## About the author

Dr Martha Deiros Collado, is a clinical psychologist and HCPC registered practitioner with over 20 years of clinical and academic experience. Martha's expertise is in parenting, child development, and paediatric health. Whilst specialising in helping children and their parents cope with distress by taking a holistic systems approach that values the individual, their family, and the networks around them.



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