



## ENJOYING THE BEDTIME ROUTINE

Bedtime can be the best time of the day to connect with your child. It can also be stressful. This tip sheet includes some simple things you can do, as a parent, to create a familiar bedtime routine that is drama-free and that helps your child have fun, feel loved, and get to bed on time.

### THE BEDTIME BASICS

The goal of a bedtime routine is to get your child to quiet down at the same time each night and be able to fall asleep by him- or herself.

- **Follow the basic “5 B’s”** of bedtime (*bath, brush teeth, bathroom, books, bed*) and adjust them to find a routine that fits your child’s personality and your family schedule.
- **Don’t rush it.** Take 10–15 minutes to dedicate to your child during the bedtime routine. Your child will sense if you are not in the moment and will test you.
- **Help siblings help each other.** Incorporate silly contests like “who can get their pajamas on the fastest and be ready for stories” to encourage your children to help one another get ready for bed.
- **Younger children** need a consistent bedtime. Primary school age children need between 10–12 hours of sleep a night. A star chart can help children with simple tasks like brushing teeth or going to the bathroom.
- **For teens** there should be more flexibility in setting a bedtime but routine remains important. Teens need between 8.5–9.5 hours of sleep a night. Parents could move computers out of the bedroom and set times for the use of electronics. Late-night texts and emails can disrupt sleep and cause insomnia.

### TRANSITIONING TO BED

To transition from computer time to bedtime, offer this quick compromise. Before signing off, have your child send someone like a family member or godparent an “I love you” or “Hope you dream of” note. Another idea is to work together on a big jigsaw puzzle for 10 minutes every evening until it’s done. This is a calming activity that provides an opportunity to talk as you work.

### BEDTIME ACTIVITIES: CALMING ACTIVITIES AND GAMES

- **Around the world/in my grocery cart:** Start with A and see how many places or types of food you can think of that start with A.
- **Jokes:** Let your child tell you a joke – and then tell them one.
- **The Guessing game:** Someone thinks of an object, animal, or movie. Each person takes a turn guessing the other’s secret answer by asking questions that have either a “yes” or “no” answer. For example: “Is it alive?” “Is it man-made?”

### BEDTIME ACTIVITIES: STORIES

- **Read stories or sing together:** Let your child pick their 1–2 favorite books/songs.
- **Create stories together:** Children particularly like stories about them or related to them – “Once upon a time, a little girl/boy named (your child’s name here) and...”
- **Tell a story about me:** Tell your child a story about themselves. How they got their name, when they came home from the hospital or their first day of school.
- **Madlibs:** Create your own fill-in-the-blank stories and let your child pick words to change the meaning of the story. Once upon a time there was a little...
- **Finger play/shadow puppets/stuffed animal stories.** Create a little show for your child using your fingers to have little conversations by wiggling them around as if they are people. Use different voices and work through different scenarios. Stories can be silly, playful, nurturing, or comforting. Example... Mom: “It’s time for bed little one” Child: “Aw no, I still want to play”...

### BEDTIME ACTIVITIES: CONNECTING AND SHARING

- **Highs and lows:** Share the best part of your day and worst part of the day.
- **Drawing or journaling:** Keep a pad of paper near your child’s bed. Little kids can draw a picture about their day or a dream they want to have. Older children might journal or draw comics.
- **Guess the feeling:** Act out an emotion and the others guess what the person is feeling.
- **Newscaster:** Suggest that your child is a newscaster and let them sit up in bed and give you the report of the day. You can then report back to them on your day.
- **Give thanks/make a wish:** Share one thing you are thankful for and one thing you wish for.
- **If you could:** If you could have any superpower what would it be? If you could be any animal what would you be? If you could travel anywhere where would you go?

### SUMMARY

It might take time to find a bedtime routine that works for you and your family. By incorporating some of the ideas from this tip sheet, you may find that bedtime is not only less stressful, but a time of the day when you can really connect with your child.

If you need additional support or more information, you can contact Family Centre and ask to speak with a Community Support Worker at 232-1116.