

## **Easy mistakes parents make**

Like adults, children's sleep times can vary so don't feel anxious if your child isn't asleep by a set time. But as long as they are lying down and are quiet, it's promoting a relaxing environment.

If your child can't sleep don't be tempted to get them back out of bed, instead encourage them to be quiet and lie down – this will help promote a relaxing environment.

Try not to get cross with your child if they're refusing to go to sleep. This only aggravates the situation and doesn't aid the relaxing atmosphere before bed. This

isn't to say you should let them get away with being troublesome – be firm but in control.

Ensure the environment is right for sleep – it should be cool, quiet, dark and free from distraction. Ideally computers, gaming machines and TVs should be banned from the bedroom but if that's unlikely keep them away from the bed and try to limit the use of these devices just before bedtime!

It's also extremely important to make sure the bed is comfortable and supportive for a growing child – many parents think nothing of spending a fortune on shoes for a child's growing feet but scrimp on a mattress! An old, lumpy mattress can contribute to back problems later in life and may affect allergies such as asthma or eczema.

Don't use the bedroom as a punishment either. Often parents use 'going to bed' as a time out or as a punishment for being naughty but this will only lead to them associating it with negative behavior and stop them wanting to go to bed.

Don't use staying up late as a treat! Keep regular hours where possible as children thrive on routine.

Be mindful of how much sleep your child needs. As a general rule of thumb toddlers need around 12 hours of sleep a night; children aged four to six – 10.5-11.5 hours; six-12 years olds – 10 hours; and teenagers – around eight to nine hours.