

Getting ready for bed can sometimes be a problem for children on the Autism Spectrum...

...Some children may find bedtimes and going to sleep difficult. They may for example be unable to settle at bedtime, or find it hard to stay asleep.



Books:

- ∞ Sleep Better!: Guide to Improving Sleep for Children with Special Needs [Paperback] V.Mark Durand (Author)

The content within the above has no connection with the Autism Spectrum Team and as such they hold no legal obligation.



Autism Spectrum Team
Sedgemoor Centre
Priory Road
St Austell
PL25 5AB
www.cornwall.gov.uk

Autism Spectrum Team



Going to sleep and staying asleep

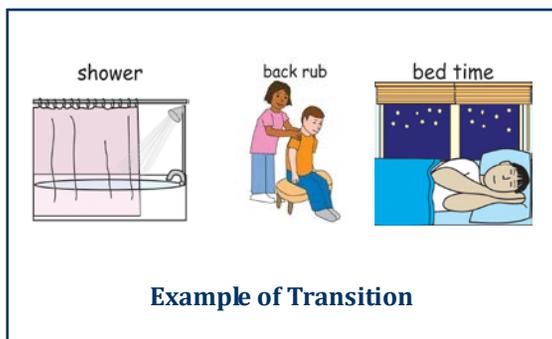


Typical Behaviours:

At bedtime, or during the night, you child may seem to be:

- Angry
- Upset
- Distressed
- Anxious
- Avoidance
- Disruptive
- Hungry

It may not always be obvious what the problem is and it is helpful to think about why this may be happening.



- **Not recognizing that they are tired**
- **Outside distractions**
- **Transition**
 - For example, going from being awake and on the go to relaxed and sleepy.
- **Sensory needs and room distraction**
 - For example, any bright lights (from computers, or switches) or background noise (such as the hum of a computer or the ticking of a clock). Not staying warm enough throughout the night.
- **Fear of falling asleep or of what sleep is**
 - For example, not knowing what other people do when they are, or whether they will ever wake up again – perhaps even what sleep is.
- **Separation:**
 - Being away from the rest of the family
- **Over/Under tired**
- **Dreaming or night terrors**
 - Previous dreams or nightmares have created a fear of falling asleep
- **Seasonal changes**
 - For example, summer has more daylight and your child may struggle to fall asleep – the extra daylight hours may make it hard for your child to go to sleep.
- **Sharing rooms with another individual**
 - The distraction of another person and their routine may upset their sleep pattern

Strategies:

-
- **Social stories to explain what others do when asleep and why sleep is important**
 - Could use pictures of people sleeping etc
- **Good bedtime routine**
 - Children with ASC prefer routine and so keeping to the same sleeping and waking times will enable a better sleep pattern
- **Visual reinforcement**
 - Pictures of the activities in the run up to bedtime and what bedtime 'looks' like
- **Counting down to bedtime**
 - Establish a routine of what happens from dinner through to bedtime – picture timelines may be useful
- **Calm and enjoyable activities before bedtime**
- **Sensory:**
 - Bedding (different fabrics/smell of the washing powder or conditioner), lights, objects, sounds.
- Explore each part of your routine to identify issues
- Reward systems to support difficult parts of routine

