

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.



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Autism Spectrum Team



**Going to sleep and
staying asleep**

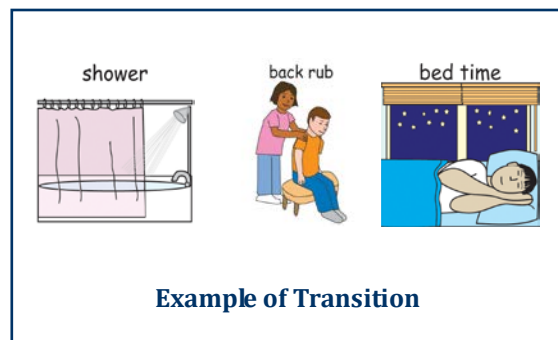


Typical Behaviours:

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:

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- **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

