

20 Sleep Tips
For the Autism Spectrum



1. Exercise, exercise, exercise! Lots of climbing, running, swinging during the daytime.
2. Try an Epsom Salt bath before bedtime. It contains a lot of magnesium so it's very calming. It's cheap and easily available everywhere. Add about 1 and half to two cups under the running water as the tub fills. Get out the water toys and let them play for at least 20-30 minutes!
3. Don't eat close to bedtime. Eat the last meal or snack at least an hour before bedtime.
4. Sit quietly in your child's room in the middle of the night. What do you hear? Listen for sounds that may be keeping your child from a good night's sleep:
 - a. Barking dogs and other animal noises
 - b. The sounds of a busy road nearby
 - c. A heat pump or hot tub that cycles on and off all night
 - d. Tree branches that touch the house
 - e. Birds that are loud and noisy just before dawn
 - f. Industrial noise
 - g. Remember, children and adults on the spectrum usually cannot tune out or ignore annoying sounds – they never get used to them! You may have to give them a bedroom on the other side of the house.
5. Go to bed at the same time every night, even on weekends. Bedtime routines should be predictable, soothing and quiet. Save the wrestling for during the day!
6. Here's a hidden gem of a suggestion - elevate the head of the bed by placing a pillow or wedge under the head of the mattress. This helps with possible acid reflux, which may

be one of the main reasons your child can't fall asleep at night. Many families are shocked at how much this can help with restless sleep and night awakenings.

7. Turn down the thermostat – cool temperatures promote better sleep!
8. Provide basic GI support to relieve reflux, constipation and dysbiosis – all things ASD children may be prone to. This includes digestive enzymes with DPP-IV, probiotics and an antimicrobial rotation. See www.LoveAutismHealth.com for more information.
9. Stop all video games, computer work, TV and electronic devices at least one hour before bedtime. Switch to lower-key activities such as coloring or reading.
10. Chocolate should be consumed earlier in the day, as it can be stimulating.
11. Reduce or eliminate caffeine. If you cannot eliminate it entirely, at least consume it early in the day.
12. White noise such as a fan or soft music might be helpful
13. Make sure no drafts or vents blow directly on or across the bed
14. Add a small night light to the room to calm anxiety
15. Use Essential Oils known for calming – use a food-grade oil if rubbed into the skin.
16. Alpha – Stim
17. Try some calming supplements such as GABA or magnesium

18. Chamomile tea

19. Do not get in the habit of giving Benadryl for sleep – this is not healthy for your child in the long run

20. Melatonin for occasional use - If you have to give your child more than 2 or 3 mg of melatonin, you need to look to the GI tract for pain and reflux, or check the levels of excitatory neurotransmitters. It's important to note that no matter how much you give your child, it only helps them *get* to sleep; it doesn't *keep* them asleep throughout the night. Avoid the mistake of giving larger and larger doses in a misguided effort to help your child stay asleep. I've seen parents give their young children enough melatonin to put down a horse in the effort to prevent night awakenings.

Good luck, I hope your little angel gets a good night's sleep!

