***[Sleep and Your Special Needs Child – Six changes to make during the day to help at night](http://intheplayroom.co.uk/2014/06/13/sleep-and-your-special-needs-child/%22%20%5Co%20%22Sleep%20and%20Your%20Special%20Needs%20Child%20%E2%80%93%20Six%20changes%20to%20make%20during%20the%20day%20to%20help%20at%20night)***

*By* [In The Playroom](http://intheplayroom.co.uk/author/firawla/) *in* [Autism & Special Needs](http://intheplayroom.co.uk/category/autism/)[5 Comments](http://intheplayroom.co.uk/2014/06/13/sleep-and-your-special-needs-child/#comments)

If bedtime is a battle, here are five tips from Antonia Chitty and Victoria Dawson, authors of [Sleep and Your Special Needs Child](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/0719807913?tag=inthepla-21&camp=2902&creative=19466&linkCode=as4&creativeASIN=0719807913&adid=0ZS2PNSMD131094YRG7G&) that may help to make bedtime easier.

1. Check what your child is eating during the day time.  Some foods can give children a sugar rush and can therefore hinder a good night’s sleep.  Choose slow releasing carbohydrates such as porridge, calcium based food are good too like yoghurts or fromage frais.  Avoid anything containing caffeine or sugary snacks.
2. Ensure that your child exercises during the day but not too close to bedtime.  Exercise is important in maintaining fitness and can also help children to sleep better.  If your child is exercising however too close to bedtime this can have the reverse effect and actually make them feel more awake.
3. Plan what will happen right from your child returning home from school.  Make sure that you plan in time for calming activities, such as completing a [jigsaw puzzle](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_nkw=jigsaw+puzzle) in the hour leading up to bedtime.  Use your child’s interests to help you to plan activities that they are going to be motivated by.
4. Avoid screen-based activities in the hour leading up to bedtime as the light can combat your child’s body’s signals to wind down. Cover up the television with a cloth: this can act as a visual signal that it is no longer available. There is some research to suggest that children on the autistic spectrum do not create enough melatonin to help them to nod off, the television can actually hinder melatonin production further so it is sound advice to avoid any screens in the hour leading up to bedtime.
5. Find out if your child is having any naps at school, this is particularly important if they are transported to school. The school bus can be an ideal place to catch up on sleep and this can interfere with night time sleep habits.  Keeping children awake on bus journeys can be a challenge but a well-stocked activity bag can help.
6. Wake them up at a regular time each morning.  This will help with their natural body clocks to strengthen which in turn helps at the other end of the day

If your child struggles with change, as many children do, pick just one suggestion from this article to introduce gradually, and see if it helps before moving onto the next one.

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