

Occupational Therapy Advice Sheet

Establish Morning Routine



Getting up on time.

- Identify a wake-up time for children starting at around 1 year- be consistent. Allowing children to get up at different times every day is confusing and makes it difficult for children to know what to expect.
- Children who are early risers can be told that it is okay to get out of bed, but they must play quietly in their room until you enter their room or until an established time.
- For families with multiple children, staggering wake up times can help ensure an efficient morning routine by helping one child at a time, beginning with the youngest child first.
- Allow older children use alarm clock/Alexa to wake themselves.

Establish organised and timely morning routines.

- Plan choosing clothes, organising homework in backpacks and deciding breakfast. This should be done the night before.
- Remove excessive clutter, and review family calendars and weather projections to avoid the unexpected.
- Involving children in decisions about clothing and food is essential. Looking at this the night before can avoid long negotiations in the morning.
- Limit younger children to two choices so the decision is easier and quick (e.g., “you may wear the plain or striped outfit”).

Promote positive behaviour and mood.

- A positive morning attitude can help make children happier during the morning routine. Greetings of “good morning” and “have a lovely day” help create a positive atmosphere and prepare a child to integrate well in school.
- Giving praise to your child for trying is important to recognise the effort they make - “Thank you for getting dressed” or “I like how you’ve tied up your hair by yourself- well done”.
- Affection is also an important way to start the day, so begin with some cuddle time or a hug. This can be a quick way to start the morning routine with care.

Preparation is important.

- Talk with your child the night before about what will happen the next morning. Ask them to name the steps of the morning routine.
- Reviewing the morning routine helps to reinforce it. In the morning as they complete a task, ask them what is next.
- Creating a visual checklist can help a child participate in the morning routine. Spend time creating the checklist with your child so he or she gets excited about using it. Ask for suggestions on what to include and ask him or her to draw pictures for each step. See sample:



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- Help avoid distractions by leaving the television off in the morning.

Promote your child's independence.

- It may be faster and easier to dress children or do their hair, but it is important for them to practice and learn to engage in the morning routine independently. Explain to your child that this will increase their freedom as they grow.
- Allow children to dress independently on weekends and then progress to weekdays as they become more skilled. Start with a certain aspect of dressing, like putting on socks. Then add more difficult clothing, like shirts with buttons.

Be flexible & maintain structure.

- Despite the importance of routine, there are some weekends and holidays, where the routine structure can be relaxed.
- Plan pyjama days, fun breakfast times on weekends and holidays to let your children know that sometimes the routine can be changed.

Make morning routines fun!

- Remember- fun and play are crucial to promoting children's development. Be creative with child' and dressing. Play upbeat music while children are getting dressed. If they get dressed early, allow them to play with their favourite toy. Reward your child for completing the routine independently.