

Help your kids sleep in heavenly peace

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Stick to bedtime routines through the holidays, expert says.

(HealthDay)—Changes in routine can shortchange children's sleep during the holidays, so a sleep medicine expert offers some advice for parents.

Keep your youngsters' [sleep](#) times consistent, said Jodi Mindell, a [clinical psychologist](#) at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia.

"As much as possible, be sure to stick to your child's usual sleep schedule— both [bedtime](#) and nap times," she said in a university news release.

"Of course, there will be exceptions, such as for family holiday gatherings, but try not to make the exception more than one or two nights in a row. If there are too many days of being off schedule, you can expect meltdowns," Mindell added.

It's also important to maintain normal bedtime routines.

"If every night is usually a bath and a story in bed, then do a bath and a story in bed, even on holiday nights," Mindell said.

"Skimping on the bedtime routine or doing your routine some place else, such as reading stories in front of the fireplace, will often backfire. It's much more exciting than calming," she explained.

It's also important to stick with normal morning routines, she said.

"If your child is not able to tell time yet, then use a 'good morning' light in the bedroom. This is simply a nightlight on a timer that is set to go off at a reasonable time, such as 6:30 or 7 a.m., which will let your child know when it's time to get up for the festivities," Mindell said.

If your children's sleep routines go off track despite your best efforts, she recommended easing them back into their normal habits.

"If your child's schedule has completely shifted over the holidays, slowly change back starting the two to three days before life returns to usual schedules, by adjusting bedtime and wake time by 15 to 30 minutes every day," Mindell advised.

More information: The U.S. National Sleep Foundation has more about [children and sleep](#).

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