

Does your child need a little help to do the things they love or need to do every day?

Here are some tips and tricks to try.

We will be adding to these topics over time and hope you find them helpful.

For questions, feedback or requests for future topics please email us at: helen.allison@nas.org.uk

Sleeping



Quality sleep is important for children's mental, physical, social and emotional development and functioning. A good night's sleep should help them do the things they love or need to do at home and school.

Many autistic children find it hard to get to sleep and/or stay asleep. This can be for many reasons, including:

- differences in melatonin secretion (the hormone that regulates sleep patterns) or circadian rhythms (body clock)
- difficulty relaxing for sleep
- differences in the processing of sensory information from the environment
- not understanding they need to go to sleep
- medical issues causing discomfort, e.g. food allergies or asthma

The following can be useful:

- keep a diary of how your child sleeps to help you notice factors that may be affecting their sleep
- keep a consistent, relaxing bedtime routine
- make their bedroom environment cosy and calming
- try a light snack in the hour before bed but avoid heavy meals before sleep
- talk to a GP about managing medical issues causing discomfort



For detailed tips on all of these and more see:

- [The National Autistic Society sleep guide for parents](#)
- [The Sleep Charity website](#)

If these don't help, do get in touch with us so we can work with you.

If your child's sleep does not improve with additional help, your GP may refer you to a Paediatrician or Child Psychiatrist who can prescribe melatonin.

Independent Living Skills



In 2023 we started using the [Wheel of Independence](#) to teach our secondary and Hub students independence living skills to build their confidence and give them the ability to take control of their lives when they are older.

If your child is in one of these classes, their teacher will have told you what skills they are learning in school so you can help them develop these skills at home. But you can start any time by slowly changing your routines to let your child do more tasks.

Everyone learns differently, so you may have to adapt the way you teach to suit your child. The following can be useful:

- use their interests to make it fun, e.g. use bubbles, smells and toys to make bath times motivating or help them choose pyjamas with a cartoon character they love on
- use relaxing activities to support sensory sensitivities, e.g. if they find toothbrushing difficult, try a relaxing massage before and afterwards
- use sensory equipment to support sensory sensitivities, e.g. if they find toilet noises difficult, try ear defenders or music
- use adapted equipment to help with fine motor aspects of a task, e.g. specialist cutlery to support grip, plate guards to prevent spills and silicone mats to stop plates from slipping
- timetables (using pictures or lists) showing morning/evening tasks, e.g. play computer, tidy room, bath...
- visual checklists (using pictures or lists) so your child can check off each step of the task before moving on to the next
- modelling/video modelling so your child can watch you/someone else doing the task and copy step by step (remember they/you can keep pausing and rewinding a video if needed)
- teach tasks one step at a time either in sequential order (forward chaining) or in reverse ([backward chaining](#), which can be really motivating for learners)
- if they are happy trying, let them do as much as they can and wait until they ask you for help before you intervene



For detailed tips on some of these and more see:

- [SCOPE](#)

If you would like help with supporting your child's independence, do let us know so we can work with you.