



HOLIDAYS AND TRAVEL

1. Holidays and Disrupted Days

During school breaks, routines naturally shift. There may be later nights, more screen time, unstructured days and excitement of anxiety about plans. This can throw off the rhythm that helps your child feel settled at night

What helps:

- **Keep one of two familiar anchors** in place, such as wake-up time of the same wind-down routine, even if bedtime is later.
- **Use a simple daily visual** to show what is happening and what to expect. This helps ease transitions and reduce overwhelm
- **Build in quiet time** mid-afternoon, especially if the day has been full-on. Even a calm hour can prevent overstimulation later
- **Prep the evening early.** Don't wait for signs of tiredness – start dimming the lights, turning off the television and bringing the energy down well before bedtime
- **Let go of perfections.** One or two unsettled nights will not undo everything you've worked on. Think of it as a wobble, not a step backwards

2. Later Nights and Longer Days

As we move into spring and summer, lighter evenings can delay the natural rise in melatonin that helps children feel sleepy.

What helps:

- **Blackout blinds or thick curtains** can make a big difference. Even small amounts of light can keep the brain alert
- **Switch off bright lights indoors** an hour before bedtime. Use soft lighting or lamps if needed
- **Get natural daylight in the morning.** Early light helps the body clock stay on track. Morning walks, school runs or time in the garden all help reset the rhythm
- **Late-afternoon movement** like bouncing on a ball, stretching or swinging can gently increase the sleep pressure without overstimulating

3. Travelling and Jet Lag: Resetting the Clock

Travelling across time zones can confuse the body clock. It can take a few days to adjust, especially if the time difference is big.

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Tips to manage the shift:

- **Adjust the routine a few days before you travel.** Shift bedtime and wake up time by 15 to 30 minutes each day towards the new time zone
- **On arrival, move straight into the local time.** Try to eat, sleep and go outside based on the new time, not the one you've come from
- **Use daylight to your advantage.** Early morning light helps bring the body clock forward, while avoiding bright lights in the evening can help wind it back
- **Keep the wind-down routine familiar.** Even in a new environment, keeping the same steps for bedtime (such as baths, pyjamas, story) can help signal sleep, even if the time is different
- **Be patient.** It can take about one day to adjust per hour of time difference. Some days will feel off. That's okay

4. After a Disrupted Routine

When you return from a holiday or a routine shift, it helps to go back to basics

- Reinstatate the bedtime routine with familiar steps
- Rebuild sleep pressure with fresh air and movement
- Keep expectations low for a few nights. Resetting is a process