

The Sleep Window

RAISING COMPLEX KIDS CANADA

A companion to the video

"Why your ADHD kid can't sleep — it's a clock, not defiance"

You cannot **discipline a clock**. In ADHD the body clock runs later by design — about **45 minutes** later in younger children, closer to **90 minutes** in teenagers. So you stop fighting the front end of sleep and start moving the timer. Melatonin is a **signal, not a sedative**.

How to use this page: start at the bottom of the ladder with the time you want your child *asleep*, then work upward filling in the clock times for your house. The orange line is the one your child's doctor fills in with you — not the internet, and not this page.

1 Tonight — work backward from asleep *fill in your own times*

TIME · ASK YOUR DOCTOR

The signal, if your doctor has agreed to it

Small dose, hours *before* bed — never at lights-out. A whisper, not a hammer. Dose and timing come from your child's own doctor.

TIME

Screens off

Not "put it down" — out of the room. The light is one of the three rogues.

TIME

Lights down through the house

Lamps not ceilings. You are telling the clock that night has started.

TIME

Into bed

Bed is for the wind-down, not for the fight. If sleep hasn't come, quiet and dim beats lying there being told to try.

TARGET ASLEEP

Asleep

Start here. Everything above is measured back from this line.

2 The morning — this is the lever that actually moves it

- ☐ **Same wake-up time, every day — ours is _____** Including weekends. A clock dragged two hours later on Saturday spends Monday paying it back. Bedtime drifts; the anchor is wake-up.
- ☐ **Curtains open the moment he's up** — light in, sooner. Not just lights out, earlier.

- ☐ **Breakfast at the brightest window** — the sooner after waking, the stronger the pull on tonight's clock.

- ☐ **Dark Canadian winter?** — this is where a bright daylight lamp earns its place. The studies use about half an hour, as soon after waking as possible.

3 The three quiet rogues *tick any that sound like your house*

☐ The legs

Restless legs — that crawling, can't-hold-still feeling. Close to half of people with ADHD. He kicks the covers, can't get comfortable, gets up again. Often can't name it.

Ask your doctor about a ferritin (iron stores) test.

☐ The light

Screens in the last stretch of the evening hold the signal back at exactly the hour you need it to arrive. This is the rogue you can fix tonight, for free.

Move the charger out of the bedroom.

☐ The medication

A stimulant dose still working at bedtime will keep a child awake — and it is not always obvious which dose, or how late it's reaching.

Raise the timing with your prescriber.

Before you buy anything for sleep

1. Talk to your child's own doctor first — especially before melatonin, and ask about iron if there are restless legs.
2. If melatonin is right for your child: small, earlier, not at bedtime. It moves the clock; it does not sedate.
3. Skip the gummies. They are the least reliably dosed product on the shelf — one 2023 analysis found 22 of 25 products inaccurately labelled.

4. Weighted blanket? Right weight, and give it two consistent weeks before you judge it.

5. The biggest lever isn't at night at all. It's morning light and a fixed wake-up time.

The jar of "SLEEP" your phone pushes at midnight is selling to how tired you are — not to your child's biology.