



5 Steps To
**Better Sleep for
the Whole Family.**



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The majority of people see lack of sleep in a household with children as a rite of passage, and there's some truth to that. But there's also a lot you can do to help mom, dad, and the kids all sleep better. Sleep isn't just downtime; it's crucial for cognitive function, emotional regulation, and overall well-being, especially in today's stressful climate. We understand the challenges many families face with changing sleep patterns, but there are proactive, research-backed steps you can take to improve sleep quality for everyone under your roof. This guide walks through five of them, one at a time, with simple things you can try tonight.

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**STEP 01****Set a Consistent Sleep-Wake Schedule for Everyone**

Our bodies run on an internal clock called the circadian rhythm, which is regulated largely by light exposure and the hormone melatonin. When that clock is disrupted by inconsistent bedtimes and wake times, everyone in the house pays for it: kids get overtired and wired, teenagers struggle to fall asleep at a reasonable hour, and adults wake up groggy no matter how many hours they logged. Sleep researchers call the gap between weekday and weekend sleep patterns “social jet lag,” and it produces effects similar to crossing time zones every week. The fix isn’t complicated, but it does take commitment from the whole family. Pick a bedtime and wake time for each person and stick to it within about 30 minutes, even on weekends and school breaks. Consistency is what teaches the brain when to release melatonin and when to produce cortisol to wake up alert. It typically takes one to two weeks of a steady schedule before the benefits become noticeable, so give it time before deciding whether it’s working.

Try This Tonight

- Keep wake time the anchor, not bedtime — waking at the same time every day, even after a late night, resets the clock fastest.
- Get 10–15 minutes of morning sunlight to reinforce the wake signal.
- If weekend schedules have to shift, keep the difference under an hour.



STEP 02

Build a Wind-Down Routine

The hour before bed determines how easily anyone in the house actually falls asleep. Screens are the biggest obstacle: the blue light from phones, tablets, and TVs suppresses melatonin and keeps the brain alert right when it should be slowing down. Beyond screens, a rushed or inconsistent bedtime routine sends mixed signals to a developing brain, or a stressed adult one, about what's supposed to happen next. Build a simple, repeatable sequence that takes 30 to 45 minutes and doesn't change much night to night. For younger kids, that might be bath, pajamas, teeth, book, lights out. For teens and adults, it might be putting devices away, a warm shower, light stretching, or journaling. The specific activities matter less than the predictability and the fact that they're calming rather than stimulating. Over time, the routine itself becomes a cue that tells the body it's time to downshift, which shortens the time it takes to fall asleep.

Try This Tonight

- Set a screen curfew 60 minutes before bed for the whole family, parents included.
- Keep the same sequence of activities each night so it becomes an automatic cue.
- Swap stimulating conversations or homework for calmer ones in the last 30 minutes.



STEP 03

Optimize the Sleep Environment

A bedroom built for sleep makes falling and staying asleep dramatically easier, and small environmental changes often produce outsized results. Temperature matters more than most people realize: a room that's too warm interferes with the natural drop in core body temperature that helps trigger sleep, so aim for somewhere around 65–68°F. Light is the next biggest factor — even small amounts from hallway lamps, electronics, or streetlights can disrupt melatonin production, so blackout curtains or a simple sleep mask can help light sleepers of any age. Noise is easiest to manage with a white noise machine or fan, which masks sudden sounds like a sibling's door closing or a car outside. It also helps to keep the bedroom reserved primarily for sleep, rather than homework, screen time, or family arguments, so the brain learns to associate the space with rest rather than stimulation. Finally, don't overlook the basics: a supportive mattress and pillow matched to the sleeper's age and preferred position make a real difference over time.

Try This Tonight

- Keep the room between 65–68°F if possible; cooler is generally better than warmer.
- Add blackout curtains or a sleep mask to block streetlight and early sunrise.
- Use a white noise machine or fan to smooth out household sounds overnight.

**STEP 04****Support Your Nervous System**

Quality sleep depends on a nervous system that has shifted out of “fight or flight” and into a calmer, parasympathetic state, and for a lot of families that shift doesn't happen naturally at the end of a busy day. Stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline that were useful during a hectic afternoon of homework, practices, and deadlines don't just switch off the moment the lights go out. Simple practices help the body downshift: slow, deep breathing (a count of four in, hold for four, out for six works for kids and adults alike), gentle stretching, or a few quiet minutes of gratitude journaling before bed. Physical tension held in the body, whether from sitting at a desk all day, carrying a heavy backpack, or general growing pains, can also keep the nervous system on alert even when someone feels tired. This is one of the reasons many families find that regular chiropractic care supports better sleep: adjustments help reduce physical tension and nervous system stress that can otherwise interfere with the ability to fully relax at night, for kids and adults alike.

Try This Tonight

- Try a simple 4-4-6 breathing pattern (inhale 4, hold 4, exhale 6) for two minutes before lights out.
- Notice where the body holds tension — shoulders, jaw, low back — and stretch it out before bed.
- Ask your chiropractor how nervous system care fits into a family sleep routine.



STEP 05

Mind What You Eat and Drink Before Bed

What goes into the body in the hours before sleep has a direct effect on how easily everyone drifts off and stays asleep. Caffeine is the most obvious culprit, and it has a longer half-life than most people assume; a soda or chocolate snack in the late afternoon can still be affecting a child's, or parent's, nervous system at bedtime. Sugar works similarly, causing a spike and later a dip in blood sugar that can lead to restlessness or middle-of-the-night waking. On the other end, going to bed hungry isn't helpful either, so a light snack with some protein, like a small yogurt or a few crackers with cheese, is a reasonable choice if someone is hungry close to bedtime. Heavy or rich meals too close to bedtime force the digestive system to work when it should be winding down, which can cause discomfort that interferes with sleep. Hydration matters too, but timing it well, drinking plenty during the day and tapering off in the couple of hours before bed, helps avoid the wake-ups that come from a full bladder in the middle of the night.

Try This Tonight

- Cut off caffeine, including soda and chocolate, by early-to-mid afternoon.
- Offer a light, protein-based snack rather than sugary treats if someone's hungry before bed.
- Taper fluids in the last hour or two before bedtime, especially for younger kids.

Ready for More Personalized Support?

Better sleep often starts with a body and nervous system that are functioning the way they should. If your family is still struggling with sleep despite these steps, our team at Healing STL is here to help.

Schedule a visit with us today.