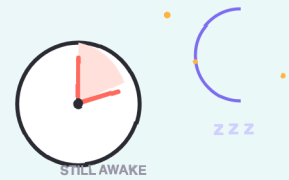


Sleep

Your inner clock runs late, so the signal to sleep arrives late. You can't will yourself under – but you can move the clock.



● What it is

Sleep that won't start. Lights out, but the brain keeps running – and an hour later you're still awake, not even tired. Then you can't get up for school. It isn't being lazy or wired-on-purpose; the body's signal to sleep simply fires late.

The tell: "I'm not tired" at bedtime, wide awake at midnight, then dead to the world at 7am. Up to 70% of ADHD kids have this, vs 20-30% of everyone else – it's the rule, not bad luck.

● Why it's harder for ADHD

The same not-now clock that loses track of time also runs the sleep signal – and in an ADHD brain that signal is set late. **The "wind down" chemical, melatonin, rises about 45 minutes later than it should, so at lights-out the brain is still going full speed.** You're not refusing to sleep; the green light to sleep hasn't come on yet.

● The clock runs late

The signal that says "time to wind down" arrives late, so a normal bedtime feels like the middle of the afternoon to your body. Forcing the lights off doesn't move the signal.

● It feeds back

A short night isn't separate from the ADHD. Lose even ~40 minutes and next-day focus drops from fine into the range that looks like full inattention; mood and patience go with it.

● What helps

● Anchor with a fixed wake-up

Pick one wake time and hold it – weekends included. A steady wake-up is the strongest anchor for a clock that drifts late; sleeping in on Saturday shoves it later and you start the week jet-lagged.

● Same wind-down, phone out of the room

A consistent routine before bed is the single best-tested fix here – it beats everything else measured. Same short sequence every night, phone charging elsewhere, so the bedroom goes back to being where the brain powers down.

● Light is the clock's signal

Light sets the clock. Daylight soon after waking pulls it earlier; bright screens at night push the already-late clock later. Get light in the morning; dim the room and the screens for the last hour.

● Melatonin shifts the clock – the doctor's call

In trials it pulled sleep onset ~27 minutes earlier, taken in the early evening to move the clock, not as a bedtime knockout. It fixes *when* you fall asleep, not daytime ADHD. It's a hormone – dose and timing are the prescriber's job.

● Skip the gadgets that don't work

Weighted blankets and blue-light glasses both did nothing for falling asleep in controlled trials; valerian keeps failing against placebo. They're not the lever – the routine, the light, and the fixed wake time are. Don't waste the effort there.

► Action Card – Get to Sleep

Learn it when you're calm; keep it where you sleep.

SET THE CLOCK • EVERY DAY

- 1 Same wake time every day – weekends too. Get daylight soon after you're up.
- 2 Cut caffeine after lunch; end the last big screen session about an hour before bed.
- 3 If melatonin's in the plan, take it in the **early evening** – and let the doctor set the dose and time.

WIND DOWN • THE LAST HOUR

- 4 Phone out of the room, lights dim, same short routine in the same order every night.
- 5 Bed is for sleep. Not under in ~20 minutes? Get up, do something boring in dim light, come back when your eyes get heavy.
- 6 Protect the hours – a short night costs you focus and patience you'll feel by mid-morning.

Your clock runs late. You can't will yourself asleep – but you can move the clock.

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