

Sleeping

DESCRIPTION

Sleeping requires us to be able to relax and calm successfully. For some children they can have difficulties with doing this.

HELPFUL HINTS

Establish a regular evening routine leading up to a consistent bedtime.

- Carry out activities in the same order each night. A picture to do list, transition warnings and a consistent bedtime can all help a child who resists bedtime.
- Encourage quieter activities at the end of the day to lower activity levels such as reading, colouring or drawing sitting on or lying on their tummy on a large beanbag to colour or do homework etc.
- Use calming background music.
- Warm baths before bed can help to calm. However, for some children a shower or even a bath is actually over stimulating just before bedtime. If this is the case move bath time to the morning or earlier in the evening.
- A light protein and complex carbohydrate snack (small bowl of cereal or toast) can calm down some children. Sugary cereals, fruit or undiluted fruit juices may increase activity levels. Milky drinks may help but be careful it doesn't mean that they need to go to the toilet in the night.



- Try spending a few minutes lying or sitting down next to your child, discussing the day and what will happen tomorrow. Following your bedtime routine and short time with your child allow your child to settle themselves independently. Often children struggle going to sleep because they don't want to miss out on exciting activities. Reassurance that first thing in the morning they can play with their favourite toy may help them get over their reluctance.
- Try giving your child a back rub or massage or squeeze their feet, legs, hands and arms tightly before they fall asleep. You may like to do this when drying your child after bath time if appropriate.
- Avoid activities, which will cause excitement leading up to bedtime e.g. spinning, running around, jumping, climbing and high activity television.
- Sit with your child and read books before bedtime and consider allowing the use of bedtime story tapes or calming music.



- Encourage your child to sleep with a comfort object such as a blanket.
- Don't wait to put your child to bed when they are so exhausted that they crash as the window between drowsy sleep and being over tired is short. If they become over tired they can become irritable.

The environment:

Consider your child's bedroom, which may be very busy and stimulating.

- Organise the toys and games so that they can be put away or put out of sight at night.
- Minimise busy wall displays or decorations
- Use dark heavy curtains or blackout blinds to reduce the light stimulation.
- A night-light or dimmer switch on the main light may help if your child dislikes the dark.
- Use heavy duvets/blankets or a sleeping bag during colder months to provide consistent deeper pressure around the body.
- Change to a sleeping bag made from a sheet or lightweight fabric in the summer to avoid losing bedclothes during the night. This swaddling effect can also help to calm some children.
- A scented lotion or a lavender filled pillow can encourage sleep as can listening to a bubble tube or fan (not directed at the child).

