

SLEEP AND FATIGUE



INTRODUCTION

School aged children should aim for 9-11 hours of uninterrupted sleep every night. Attention to routine, environment, and behaviour will help you fall asleep and stay asleep.

ROUTINE

- go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time every morning, even on weekends and school holidays.
- do relaxing and calming activities 1-2 hours before bed such as reading, listening to music, or having a 'wind-down' talk with your family,
- have a bath or shower 1-2 hours before going to bed, but not just before going to bed
- in the first few days or week after your concussion you may need more sleep including naps during the day. If you do want a nap, do it before 3pm, sleep no longer than 30 minutes, and use your usual bed. However as time goes on, avoid this as it can make it harder to fall asleep at night.
- try to keep your daytime routine the same, especially during the week. If you feel tired during the day don't avoid activities as this can reinforce bad sleeping patterns and habits.



ENVIRONMENT

- make your bedroom a clean, tidy, attractive and comfortable space, and one that you look forwards to going into.
- make your bedroom dark and quiet. Consider using curtains, eye masks, and ear plugs to block out light and noise.
- ensure your bedroom is not too hot or cold. Have enough blankets available on cold nights.
- open your curtains soon after waking up so you see natural light. 20 minutes of bright sunshine first thing in the morning helps your body's sleep-wake cycle.
- don't have any screens or devices on in the room. If this is not possible, make sure they're turned off or in 'sleep' mode

BEHAVIOUR

Quieten the mind in preparation for sleep;

- avoid sugar and caffeine within 4-6 hours of bedtime (caffeine is found in cola and energy drinks, tea or coffee, and chocolate).
- avoid exercise, computer games, TV, loud music, or other energetic or stimulating activities 2 hours before going to bed. Exercise earlier in the day can promote sleep.
- get some natural light during the day, especially in the morning. If you are sensitive to light after your injury still make sure you spend some time outside.
- use the bed for sleeping only; don't eat, study, watch TV, play games, or use a phone or other device in bed. Turn them off at least 30 minutes before bedtime. The light emitted from the screen and the thinking activities involved can stop your brain from 'switching off'
- consider the timing of meals; don't go to bed hungry, and don't eat a large meal just before going to bed
- don't look at the clock while trying to fall asleep. You might want to remove it completely from the room, or cover it with a cloth. If you don't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and do something calming and go back to bed when you feel sleepy. This may be something as simple as listening to quiet relaxing music, or cuddling your pet!
- imagining a fantasy or 'special' place may help to calm your mind and help you to fall asleep more easily



If these tips don't work on the first night, keep trying! Think about anything else in your life that may be affecting your sleep. This can include medications, your friends and relationships, stress in your school and personal life, and other physical and mental health conditions.

FATIGUE

Fatigue during the day can be mental, physical, or a combination of both. If you are sleeping well at night but are still tired during the day, try the following;

1. Don't get TOO much rest; you'll need to do physical activity each day even if you're feeling tired. Sometimes you need to use energy to make energy!
2. Change positions and activities regularly. Don't sit for hours at a desk doing the same task.
3. Pace yourself. Don't try to get back to all your usual activities straight away. Do a bit more each day depending on how you feel. If you feel like you need a break sit out an activity, but try to do it the next day if you're feeling better.
4. Alternate your activities so you do something relaxing and restful after an activity that is more demanding
5. Organize your day so that you do more demanding school work and other activities in the morning
6. Have a break in the middle of the day to rest your brain and body; go to the library, read a book under a tree, talk to a friend.
7. You may also need some 'time out' at school to go to a quiet area of the classroom
8. If you feel yourself starting to get tired, do something about it before you become excessively tired

Try to work out if any particular mental or physical tasks make you tired and apply the above advice to those things.

By 4 weeks from your injury you should be able to cope with all your social, school, sports, and daily life activities without being too tired. If you still have difficulties with fatigue and sleep, discuss your concerns with a health professional.