

SLEEP

The Importance of Sleep and How to Promote a Restful Night

Environmental Modifications

Each child is unique and may benefit from different sleep environments. If your child is having difficulty falling and staying asleep, consider the following modifications to find the best fit for your child:

Sound

Some children may enjoy falling asleep to a fan, white noise machine, or other rhythmic, calming nature sounds playing quietly to block out background noises. Others may prefer to be rocked or held in silence.

Light

Consider offering a night light or lava lamp to comfort children as they fall asleep. Other children may need limited visual distractions and would benefit from a bed tent or darkening shades on the windows. It may also help to reduce visual clutter by placing toys and clothes into closets or bins.



The Importance of Sleep

As many children prepare to head into an exciting year of school, sleep is one key tool that can help make this a positive experience and transition. Sleep helps children to maintain focus throughout the day, keep their energy levels up, and self-regulate throughout the many social and academic activities expected of them. The amount of sleep required for optimal health ranges, from 11-13 hours/day for preschoolers, 10-11 hours/day for school aged children, and approximately 9 hours/day for teenagers. Getting a restful night's sleep is as important as a balanced diet and exercise to maintain health and energy levels.





Touch

Include bath time and massage as part of the bed time routine for those children who are soothed by touch, and offer plenty of hugs and snuggles. Some children may prefer weighted blankets, lycra sheets, tightly tucked sheets, or vibrating pillows to help their bodies feel calm and secure. Others may enjoy wiggling on an air mattress, memory foam mattress cover, or egg crate. For those children with tactile sensitivities, have them help pick out preferred textures for pajamas and sheets.

Smell

Experiment with lavender scented bubble bath, lotion, pillow mist, fabric softener, essential oil air diffuser, etc. Some children may also feel more secure with a stuffed animal that smells like their parents/ caregivers to ease separation anxiety.

Temperature

Most people sleep better in a colder environment, with an optimal sleeping temperature of 60-67 degrees Fahrenheit.

• **Don't hit the snooze button!**

Waking up at the same time every day is the number one rule of getting a consistently good night's sleep. This helps children to begin to develop their internal clock, gives them more energy throughout the day, and provides a familiar routine.

• **Encourage play and exercise**

Allow opportunities throughout the day for plenty of heavy work (i.e. push, pull, jump, climb, or squeeze) and movement. Switch gears about an hour before bed time and end the day with more pushing, pulling, and quiet activities right before bed to help them calm their bodies.

• **Create a bedtime routine**

This may involve calming activities such as bath time, reading a bed time story, gently rocking in a chair or swinging back and forth in a blanket, a massage with lavender scented lotion, or even getting a small snack such as a banana or cherries, which help promote sleep. Many children may benefit from a visual schedule so they are more prepared for the transition. Older children may also benefit from mindfulness activities and/or progressive muscle relaxation.

• **Turn off screens**

About an hour before bedtime, try to limit screen time, whether that be computers, tablets, or televisions, as the blue light emitted by screens impedes our normal sleep cycles. Some devices now include a 'night shift' option, displaying warmer colors automatically in the evening hours.

If your child's sleep difficulties persist, speak with your doctor to rule out any medical causes and to discuss possible alternatives.

