

SLEEP TIPS

Why is sleep so important?

Sleep is essential in order for your body and your mind to function at their optimal performance. Sleep impacts co-ordination, movement, sensory processing, muscle strength, appetite and digestion, blood pressure, and many other bodily functions. During childhood, sleep is especially important as the brain and body are maturing and developing. Poor sleep is very common in children who have chronic health conditions and can put these children at risk for developing other conditions. Restoring good sleep habits is associated with better psychological, physical, and cognitive well-being.

Research has begun to find that non-drug based sleep interventions are becoming quite promising. These include:

Sleep Hygiene	<p>Things people can do to improve their sleep, such as where you sleep, when you sleep, what you do during the day/before bedtime, and how your body functions (after exercising, eating, drinking, etc.). Some sleep hygiene principles to promote better sleep are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a routine of waking up and going to sleep at the same time every day. Have certain activities that you do before bed (teeth brushing, story time, etc.) • Build activity and movement into your day, slowing down 1-2 hours before bedtime • Drink plenty of fluids, cutting back 2-3 hours before bed, and limiting food before bed (other than potentially a light snack). Avoid any beverage with caffeine in the late afternoon or evening • Remove electronics and distractions in the bedroom, as possible • Keeping the bedroom as dark as possible to allow the brain to know it is bedtime • Use the bed only for sleeping (not for watching TV, eating, punishment, etc.) • Avoid late afternoon naps <p>http://sleepright.wix.com/sleep-right#!current-research/vstc1=page-2</p>
Massage	<p>Involves massaging/rubbing different body parts to help make circulation better and muscle tension lower. Approximately 15 minutes of massage before bedtime can improve behaviour and sleep.</p> <p>http://sleepright.wix.com/sleep-right#!current-research/vstc1=page-2</p>
Graduated Extinction	<p>A behavioural technique to help children fall asleep and stay asleep more easily. It involves gradually removing reinforcement/attention for unwanted or challenging behaviours at bedtime. http://sleepright.wix.com/sleep-right#!current-research/vstc1=page-2</p>
Bright Light Therapy	<p>Helps to 'reset' a child's internal biological clock of going to sleep earlier and waking up earlier. This involves exposing a child to bright lights (preferably natural sunlight) as soon as possible in the morning.</p> <p>http://sleepright.wix.com/sleep-right#!current-research/vstc1=page-2</p>

“The Children’s Best Bedroom Environment for Sleep” (CBBES) Parents’ Manual is a resource that has been developed to help parents better understand sleep and to provide them with research-tested strategies to help children to get the best sleep they can. This handbook can be accessed online at <http://cbotlabs.wixsite.com/cbbes-workbook>

Sleep and Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

The Autism Community Training (ACT) website has a series of videos on the topic of sleep, presented by Dr. Beth Malow. These videos look at sleep concerns reported in children with ASD, sleep screening, and behavioural treatments to improve children’s sleep habits (such as a visual schedule or a bedtime pass).

When creating a visual bedtime schedule, you can use photographs, objects or pictures to make a routine that is ideally 30 minutes or less. The routine should have relaxing and enjoyable activities closer to bedtime.

A sample bedtime routine could include:

- Having a bath
- Putting on pajamas
- Going to the bathroom
- Washing hands
- Brushing teeth
- Brushing hair
- Reading a book
- Going to sleep



A bedtime pass is something that can be used with a child who has difficulty staying in bed. This pass could be exchanged for one visit from a parent, one get out of bed, one drink of water, etc. If the child does not use their pass, they would be given a reward in the morning. If they get out of bed after they have already used it, the parent would put them back to bed with minimal attention, if possible.

The Autism Treatment Network has handouts and strategies with more information on supporting healthy sleep habits.

Resources:

<http://sleepright.wix.com/sleep-right>

<http://cbotlabs.wixsite.com/cbbes-workbook>

<http://www.actcommunity.ca/education/videos/solving-sleep-problems-in-children-with-asd/>