

## Sleep

Sleep is food for the brain! It helps us to function well throughout the day.

### When you are getting enough sleep, you can:

- Pay attention and concentrate better.
- Get through your work.
- Be creative and think of new ideas.
- Fight sickness easier.
- Feel full of energy and happy.
- Get along with friends, family and teachers.



### Without enough sleep you can:

- Have difficulty concentrating and staying alert.
- Have trouble making good choices.
- Be grumpy.
- Have trouble playing games and sports.
- Be less patient with family and friends.
- Have trouble listening to parents and teachers.
- Find it hard to get going in the morning.
- Find it hard to stay awake during the day.

The first step in managing a problem with sleep is to identify and avoid the everyday habits that can disrupt sleep and practice those behaviours that promote sleep.

### Things to avoid:

- Caffeine is a stimulant that makes us feel more awake. Avoid caffeine 4 hours **before** bedtime. Caffeine is found in tea, coffee, chocolate, cocoa and many soft drinks.

- Ensure there is enough time between the main evening meal and bedtime to allow the child to have digested their meal before settling. A small healthy snack before bed is appropriate as your child will find it hard to sleep when they are hungry.
- Avoid vigorous exercise two hours before bed as this can keep you awake.
- Keep your child's bedroom mainly for sleeping; try to avoid television, game consoles and eating in the bedroom.

### Things to try:



- Create a relaxing environment where your child sleeps. Keep this room calm and tidy. Choose colours that are calm and soothing, keep furniture to a minimum and make sure toys are tidied away before bedtime.
- Keep the bedroom temperature comfortable, around 16 to 18 degrees if possible.
- Minimise noise and light in the bedroom. It is particularly important to have a well-darkened bedroom with curtains or blinds that keep out streetlights or daylight.
- A light snack at bedtime may promote sleep.
- Keep to a regular bedtime routine. Follow the same routine every night so that your child knows what is expected.
- It is also important to have the same wake time. It is also a good idea to get into bright light as soon as possible in the morning.
- Exercise during the day is good for you and will help you sleep.
- Introduce 1 hour's quiet time before bedtime. In this time the TV, game consoles and loud music must be turned off, and you should choose activities that help unwind; remember, these may be different for each child.
- Baths may be calming to your children. Try a few drops of lavender oil in the water. Relaxation tapes and nature sounds may be helpful during quiet time. Try a gentle foot, hand or scalp massage may also help your child unwind and calm.
- Try lavender oil drops on the sheets or pillows.



- Using a heavy blanket, a sleeping bag, and/or encouraging your child to hug a pillow may all be beneficial as the deep touch pressure can be calming and soothing.
- Try making a tighter space for your child to sleep in e.g. pad the child in with pillows, again this can be calming and soothing.
- Get your child to wear tighter bed clothing, as the deep touch pressure can be calming and soothing.
- Introduce a vibrating toothbrush. The vibration may be easier to tolerate than the light touch from a regular toothbrush.
- Put on soft, rhythmical music or have white noise, such as a fan in the bedroom.
- Use soft lighting or complete darkness.
- Try a vibrating pillow, for some children, vibrating is soothing and will help them to settle.
- A lava lamp in the corner of the room may be relaxing for your child.
- Encourage your child to read for relaxation or alternatively read to your child as part of the bedtime routine. Avoid reading something that makes your child feel excited or angry.



#### **Wake Up Ideas:**

- Use an alarm clock, there are all sorts available: clocks that have silent vibration, that beep, that talk, radio clocks...
  - Before you get out of bed slowly stretch each body part, this will help to wake up your body.
  - Play your favourite music to get you going and set you in a good mood for the day.
  - Go for an early brisk walk or jog, exercising in the morning can help you to feel energised and ready to tackle the day ahead of you.
  - Use a vibrating toothbrush as vibration can also help to wake you up.
- NHS Borders Children and Young People's Occupational Therapy Service

For further information, please check out our Sleep Miniseries on YouTube following the link below or scan the QR code.



Scan the QR code to access the videos.

Link to YouTube channel - [Sleep Mini Series - YouTube](#)