**Sleep**

**Aim of this information**

Greater understanding of sleep cycles and why sleep is so important.

Give **you** the skills and knowledge to empower you to make changes to your child’s bedtime routine.

**Why we need sleep**

If you seem to catch every cold and flu that's going around, your bedtime could be to blame. Prolonged lack of sleep can disrupt your immune system, so you're less able to fend off bugs.

Sleeping less may mean you put on weight! Studies have shown that people who sleep less than 7 hours a day tend to gain more weight and have a higher risk of becoming obese than those who get 7 hours of slumber.

It's believed to be because sleep-deprived people have reduced levels of leptin (the chemical that makes you feel full) and increased levels of ghrelin (the hunger-stimulating hormone).

When people with anxiety or depression were surveyed to calculate their sleeping habits, it turned out that most of them slept for less than 6 hours a night.

Studies have suggested that people who usually sleep less than 5 hours a night have an increased risk of developing diabetes.

It seems that missing out on deep sleep may lead to type 2 diabetes by changing the way the body processes glucose, which the body uses for energy.

Long-standing sleep deprivation seems to be associated with increased heart rate, an increase in blood pressure and higher levels of certain chemicals linked with inflammation, which may put extra strain on your heart.

**Overview of the importance of sleep**

Sleep is as important to our bodies as food.

Growth hormones are released.

The immune system strengthens.

Consolidates memory and learning

Memory and concentration functions are increased.

Our bodies and mind rest.

**Common sleep issues**

Difficulty falling asleep.

Frequent waking at night/restless sleep.

Difficulty getting back to sleep/maintaining sleep.

Difficulty waking in the morning.

Sleepy or feeling tired during the day.

**Poor sleep can result in….**

Poor memory and attention.

Anxiety, irritability,7 hyperactivity.

Behaviour deteriorating, with aggression and tantrums.

Impact on growth.

Knock - on effect on the sleep of other family members leading to stress and tiredness.

**Stages of sleep**

During the night, you cycle through two types of sleep: non-rapid eye movement (non-REM) sleep and rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. Your brain and body act differently during these different phases.

When you sleep, your brain goes through natural cycles of activity. There are four total stages of sleep, divided into two phases:

* **Non-REM sleep** happens first and includes three stages. The last two stage of non-REM sleep is when you sleep deeply. It’s hard to wake up from this stage of sleep.
* **REM sleep** happens about an hour to an hour and a half after falling asleep. REM sleep is when you tend to have vivid dreams.

As you sleep, your body cycles through non-REM and REM sleep. You usually start the sleep cycle with stage 1 of non-REM sleep. You pass through the other stages of non-REM sleep, followed by a short period of REM sleep. Then the cycle begins again at stage 1.

A full sleep cycle takes about 90 to 110 minutes. Your first REM period is short. As the night goes on, you’ll have longer REM sleep and less deep sleep.

**Non-Rem sleep**

Your brain is quiet

Your body may move

It is the time when sleep becomes restful, and muscles relax. The body is repaired

There are 3 stages

**Stage 1:** Dozing stage- muscles are relaxed and a low heart rate

**Stage 2:** Light sleep-you can be woken up easily

**Stage 3:** Deep sleep called slow wave sleep, difficult to be woken up.

Sleep terrors, sleepwalking and talking may occur.

Immunity is strengthened.

REM sleep is when we dream.

The brain is active

The body switches off and the brain receives extra blood and processes the day’s events.

Memory is strengthened

Eyes move quickly from side to side during sleep

Muscles relax

Rem sleep is reported to be important for learning and consolidation of memory

**PARTIAL WAKING (Micro-waking)**

When we move through the stages, we experience micro- waking. Often, we are not aware and just stir, roll over and go back to sleep.

If the light was on when your child went to bed, leave it on!

**Sleepy foods**

Avoid sugary snacks and food containing caffeine.

Almonds contains magnesium and help keep blood sugar level stable overnight.

Bananas contain magnesium, potassium and tryptophan which helps us to sleep.

A cup of milk/soya milk with one banana…bedtime drink

Dairy: Yogurts, Milk and Cheese.

Oatmeal/porridge, you could add some sliced banana on top.

Cherries, particularly tart cherries. Fresh/frozen or dried cherries.

Cereal such as Weetabix, Shreddies or porridge. Non-sugared.

**Gadgets**

There is a strong link between tablet or any type of small screen that emits what is known as ‘blue light’.

If brains are being stimulated before bedtime with electronic gadgets, the brain will not shut down in preparation for sleep.

Electronic devices should be switched off 2 hours before bedtime.

**Sleep environment**

Bed and bedding (sensory)

Minimal toys / uncluttered

Temperature - 16 -18 °C

Dark curtains or blind / night light

Bed away from door

Don’t use bedroom as punishment

No screens in bedroom

**Bedtime routine**

Discuss with your child their thoughts and ideas for new routine.

Write down simple routine with visual clues.

Whole family approach.

Be Consistent.

Rewards in place for small steps and improvements.

Gentle exercise late afternoon.

Sleepy foods - snack or drink.

Wind-down time 1 hour before bedtime: reading, colouring books or relaxing music. Use a timer.

Bath, not shower, and brush teeth.

Once routine has started do not back track

Bedtime story/chat

**Tips for a bedtime routine**

**Younger child:**

Talk about issues downstairs.

Get regular exercise.

Don't go to bed hungry.

A calming bath.

Wind down time- Hand, eye coordination games.

A chat or story with parent.

Give time out card if needed

Check up on them if needed.

**Young adult:**

Get regular exercise.

Limit caffeine intake.

Don't go to bed hungry.

Don't smoke and avoid alcohol.

Avoid gadgets 2 hours before bed.

Include daily "winding-down" time- listening to calming music, read or time with you

Make the bedroom an inviting, relaxing environment.

Maintain a regular sleep/wake up time.

**Night time wakening**

Accept some periodic waking is normal.

No talking no emotion rule.

Don’t ask child what is wrong. Bad dreams/upset. Avoid disturbing the groggy sleep they may be in.

Toilet / no talking / no lights / key sleep words same way.

If bedwetting further support can be found from your GP/School Nurse.

**Waking to early**

Make bedtime appropriate for their age.

Is the room still dark?

Do they need the toilet?

Play in room instead of waking you / house up. Use chart so he knows what is expected of him if he wakes up. Have a box of quiet toys.

Build in rewards / deals / consequences.

Immediate reward. Straight away Praise.

**Teenagers**

Use positive language to discuss the importance of sleep.

The body clock alters in the teen years which means that waking and sleeping times get later and later.

A regular sleep and wake up time will help their body to cope better with the early mornings.

Energy drinks and high sugar snacks can make it harder to nod off.

Is their bedding comfortable? When did they last have a new mattress/pillow?

Try to do the same things at around the same time each night so that their body has time to prepare for sleep and relax.

Lack of sleep can cause havoc with your skin and result in spots and pimples.

The right amount of sleep will make it easier to maintain a healthy weight.

Growth hormones are released when you are asleep.

Learning to drive is great but driving when sleep deprived is seriously dangerous.

**Facts about sleep**

Increasing your child’s sleep by as little as half an hour can dramatically improve school performance.

By addressing sleep problems, you may find that your child’s ADHD symptoms improve.

Some studies suggests that better sleep will improve a child’s concentration and ability to learn.

Regular sleep and wake time regulates the body clock.

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