



Why is sleep important?

Sleep is a time for rest and recovery. It provides us with enough energy to engage in our daily occupations, and promotes physical and mental well-being. Sleep is especially important for children and teens.

Early Childhood

Early childhood is a critical time period for brain development in children. Getting enough sleep helps to promote a child's future health and development, and has been linked to improved memory performance, motor skill development, and language acquisition.



Adolescence

Teens are at higher risk for developing mental health issues and engaging in risky behaviours. Improving sleep quality is one way to promote mental health and the development of the frontal lobe of the brain, involved with decision making, impulse control, and problem-solving skills.

Common Sleep Problems

- Night time anxiety
- Nightmares/night terrors
- Physical positioning
- Insomnia
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)
- Trouble sleeping alone
- Uncomfortable bedsheets/pajamas
- Early/night awakenings

How does sleep impact our daily lives?

Self-Care: Helps our memory and reduces fatigue so we can carry out self-care activities such as bathing, eating, and getting dressed.



Productivity: Improves our attention, concentration, creativity, and memory so we can perform our best at school or at work.



Leisure: Gives us energy so that we can maintain strong social bonds and take part in enjoyable activities such as sports and playing with our friends.





SLEEP HYGIENE

"Sleep hygiene" is the actions and routines we use to set ourselves up for a good night sleep each night. If you often have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, or wake up tired every day, these strategies may help your body create a rhythm to help you get the rest when you need it.



Make sure you go to bed and wake up at the same time everyday. Follow a bedtime routine each night - this could include taking a bath, reading a book, or brushing your teeth.



During the day, make sure to exercise - but avoid it right before bed. Also avoid having caffeine 4-6 hours before bed (i.e. chocolate and soft drinks).



Find ways to unwind before bed - this may include listening to music, meditating, doing deep breathing, taking a warm bath, or gentle exercise like yoga.



For younger children, reduce napping for longer than 30 minutes within 4 hours of bedtime. For teens, avoid the urge to nap after school as it may make falling asleep at night more difficult.



Reduce screen time and avoid stimulating activities approximately 30 minutes to an hour before bedtime. Exposure to light can decrease melatonin levels, a hormone that affects our natural sleep and wake cycles.



TIPS FOR PARENTS

As a parent, if you are waking up frequently throughout the night because your child has trouble sleeping, this can lead to daytime fatigue, poor emotional regulation, and difficulty engaging in daily activities. Here are some tips to promote good sleep for both you and your child:



Create a visual schedule to promote skill learning and independence. This can be helpful for kids who function well with a predictable and consistent routine. Teens may prefer to use apps to help them remember and to build healthy sleep habits.



Encourage your child to write down their worries to put in a "worry box". Find time each day to talk about the worries to help provide validation and reduce anxiety before bed. For teens, journaling for a set time each day (i.e. 15 minutes) is another helpful option.



Establish a sleeping space for your child that can be dark when they are sleeping and bright when they are going about their day by using curtains, night masks, and lights.



Your child's sleep patterns can also impact your own well-being. Make time for stress management techniques such as yoga to help you manage your stress day to day.



Keep a sleep diary to keep track of your child's (and your own!) sleep patterns. This can help to specifically identify what is working well and barriers to getting a good nights sleep.

My Bedtime Routine

- Take a bath
- Pat on my pajamas
- Brush my teeth
- Wash my hands and face
- Listen to a story
- Get a drink of water
- Use the potty
- Say my good nights or prayers
- Get tucked into bed with kisses and hugs



Web resources on sleep:

- <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/>
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/sleep.html>
- https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/about_sleep/sleep_hygiene.html