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Safeguarding Monthly Newsletter

FOCUS ON…



SLEEP

WRITTEN BY SERVICES FOR EDUCATION

In this edition around SLEEP, we'll look at:

- **Getting the ZZZZs – The importance of sleep –**why do our children need the right amount of sleep?
- **What are the risks?** – what happens when children don't get enough sleep?
- **Sleep routines – what can you do?** how can you support your child to get better quality sleep?
- **Common sleep issues – overcoming barriers to a good night's sleep-** what can you put in place to help your child get the best rest?
- **Links to use and share –** Top resources to support keeping your children safe!

GETTING THE ZZZS – THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

Sleep can often be a battleground as a parent – whether your child is 6 or 16 – and it can be so tempting to give in and allow your child to push the boundaries which you have set. This resource aims to be a reminder about the importance of sleep, especially in your childhood, and to provide some tips and advice for you, as parents, to implement.

Why do we need sleep?

Sleep impacts upon our brain's ability to function during the day – and for children this is even more prominent as sleep is crucial for the development of a healthy brain.

A good night's sleep has been linked to:

- Better memory
- Improved emotional and social intelligence
- A stronger immune system
- Improved cardiac health
- Prevention of weight gain
- Higher energy and stamina
- Prevention of depression
- And many more…

How much sleep should my child get?

Approximate sleep timings are useful for us to know, but we must be aware that these are guidelines only. Our children may need more or less sleep than these times indicate and so we must also take into account the behaviour of our child to inform our decisions as well.

Age	Sleep Time Guidelines
Pre-school	11 – 13hrs
5 – 9yrs	10 –11hrs
10 – 14yrs	9 –10hrs
15 – 17yrs	8.5 – 9.5hrs
Adults	7 – 9 hrs

Some of the best indicators that your child has not had enough sleep are:

- When they struggle to wake
- That they show signs of tiredness
- Lack of focus during activities in the day
- Irritability and mood swings.

GOOD SLEEP ROUTINES – WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Designing and maintaining consistent bedtime routines is a critical tool for any parent. Ensuring that your routine is one which can be implemented with regularity is key to success, so creating a realistic and manageable routine for you is crucial. Understanding that routines will need to be adapted depending upon the age of the child is also important and some suggested possible routines are below.

You'll notice that for the older children, having a set time for any devices to be put away is an important factor in this suggested routine. It is well documented through numerous scientific studies, that electronic devices have a negative impact on sleep as their 'blue light' disrupts the natural production of melatonin (a hormone which helps you to feel 'sleepy'). Making 'devices away' the norm before bed from the outset is a positive way to help your child to develop healthy sleep habits.

HERE ARE SOME TOP TIPS FOR A CHILD'S SLEEP ROUTINE

A consistent sleep routine can significantly improve your child's sleep quality. Here are some effective tips:

Establish a consistent bedtime

- *Set a Regular Schedule:* Aim for a consistent bedtime and wake-up time.
- *Avoid Late Nights:* Be mindful of screen time and stimulating activities before bed.

Create a relaxing bedtime routine

- *Wind-Down Activities*: Engage in calming activities like reading, taking a bath, or listening to soft music.
- *Quiet Environment*: Ensure the bedroom is dark, quiet, and cool.

Limit stimulants before bed

- *Avoid Caffeine:* Limit caffeine intake, especially in the afternoon and evening.
- *Screen Time:* Reduce screen time, including smartphones, tablets and TVs, before bed.

Address nighttime fears and worries

- *Comforting Presence:* Be present and reassuring if your child experiences nighttime fears.
- *Night Lights and comforters:* Consider using a night light for children scared of the dark or cuddly toys for younger children who may be worried.

Be patient and consistent

- *Gradual Changes:* Introduce changes to the sleep routine gradually.
- *Positive Reinforcement:* Reward positive sleep behaviours.

Remember, each child is unique, and what works for one may not work for another. Be patient, observe your child's cues, and make adjustments as needed.

COMMON SLEEP ISSUES – OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Many parents see their children struggle with a variety of sleep issues. The most common of these are bedwetting, nightmares and night terrors, sleepwalking, self-settling and teeth-grinding.

As we have discussed, creating a consistent bedtime routine will help with any of these issues, but there are other factors to consider when searching for sleep solutions. Some further tips to help are:

- ***Lighting:*** Consider the lighting in your child's bedroom – is it too dark? Too light? Would black-out blinds or night-lights help?
- ***Sleep environment:*** Think about their bedroom and sleeping environment – is the bed comfortable? Are toys left out tempting play? Are there other distractions?
- ***Diet:*** Reflect upon their diet – perhaps your child is eating too much sugar before bed, or drinking too late in the evening rather than throughout the day?
- ***Disruptions:*** Is sibling disruption an issue for your child? Sharing a room can be problematic but necessary, so how are effective rules established? Is good, considerate behaviour rewarded? Do different bedtimes allow for a younger child to settle?
- ***Boundaries:*** Consider your own parental boundaries and support – are they balanced? This is one of the hardest points to reflect upon, but it is helpful to try to think about this with honesty. Are you able to listen to your child's concerns without judgement? Do you allow them to have their own space? Do they sleep in a room that they feel is their space?

SUPER RESOURCES FOR YOU TO USE AND TO SHARE

- The Sleep Foundation – Information and guidance
- The Sleep Charity – Information and guidance
- NHS- Safe Sleep – Information regarding babies, children and young people