Tips for a good night's sleep

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Why is sleep important?

Getting a good night's sleep is vital for our mental, emotional and physical well-being.

Sleep is important for:

- growth and development
- learning and memory
- mood and temperament

Here are some top tips to help get a good night's sleep.

Bedroom

Check that the bedroom is suitable for sleeping.

Make sure your child's bed and bedding is comfortable.

Block out as much light as possible using blackout curtains or blinds to help promote melatonin production which is the sleep hormone.

Keep the bedroom at a comfortable temperature, about 16 to 20 degrees Celsius.

Create a calm environment by keeping the bedroom tidy and free of stimulation. Think about the environment, ideally neutral colours and pastel shades.

Remove any distractions of toys and electronic devices from the bedroom or covering over these toys and devices to ensure the bedroom is a place of rest.

Create a relaxing bedtime routine

A bedtime routine is important because it teaches your child the order of events leading up to bedtime. Following a consistent routine with a set bedtime can help your child learn to fall asleep more easily.

1. Turn all screens off in the hour before bed.
2. Offer quiet activities to aid relaxation, hand eye co-ordinations activities are ideal such as colouring, jigsaws and Lego.
3. Introduce a supper time with sleepy foods that aid the natural production of melatonin.

4. Have a warm bath or shower if your child finds this relaxing. However if your child becomes over excited by bath time, then try warming nightwear instead. The slow decrease in body temperature helps to promote sleep.
5. Read to them once in bed.
6. Wake your child the same time every morning to help maintain their body clock.

Diet

Eat regular meals throughout the day.

Have a light snack and drink 30 minutes before bed. Suggested drinks would be milk, cherry juice or water, avoid fizzy drinks and drinks containing caffeine.

Suggested snacks include yogurt, cheese and bananas, avoiding sugary foods and chocolate.

For more information about foods to help sleep, please visit our sleepy foods resource (https://library.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/sleepy-foods/) .

Exercise

Exercising is good and promotes good sleep, ideally it should be done earlier on during the day. Avoid any strenuous exercising in the lead up to bedtime.

Important things to avoid before bed

Completely avoid:

- using any screens in the hour before bed, including TV, phones, games consoles, and tablet devices
- caffeine and sugary foods
- exercise in the hour before bed
- spending all your time in your bedroom, bedrooms ideally should just be used for sleeping

Disclaimer

Please note this is a generic information sheet relating to care at Sheffield Children's. The details in this resource may not necessarily reflect treatment at other hospitals. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professionals' instructions. If this resource relates to medicines, please read it alongside the medicine manufacturer's patient information leaflet. If you have specific questions about how this resource relates to your child, please ask your doctor.