



Sleep Hygiene Tips and Advice

Developing and maintaining a good sleep routine can be difficult for many families but can be particularly difficult for those families with a child who has additional needs. During this difficult period, sleep problems can be even more of a problem for a lot of people.

Here are some useful tips to think about from CAMHS and School.

Routines

- It is really important for any child to have clear routines for bedtimes that are consistent even over the weekend so they stay in sync with their sleep-wake cycle. Routines provide clear visual and physical signals to your child that bedtime is approaching.

Temperature

- Make sure their bed and/or bedroom is not too hot or too cold. If your child is sensitive to their surroundings, they may become fidgety to reach their optimum temperature and as a result be unable to settle.
- Are their teddies/dolls on the bed? Is the mattress too soft/hard? These are some factors that may be preventing your child from sleeping in their bed and cause a preference to sleep in your bed because they are unable to get comfortable on their own.

Noise

- Is your child sensitive to specific sounds? If they can hear the TV or an older sibling still up playing and talking with you, they may be less likely to fall asleep. Maybe consider letting your child sleep with ear plugs or ear defenders.

Lights

- Try keeping lights dim at night to prepare your child for sleep. Some children may have a concrete association that light means day and dark means night, so replicate this in your home.
- If your child is responding to the lighter mornings and evenings have you considered black out blinds/curtains or even just covering the windows with card so they are getting the signal that it is dark.

Food and drink

- Try not to give your child any food at least two hours before bed, especially if it has sugar in it. Children can be very sensitive to the food they eat and as food is an energy source it could make them more hyperactive just before bedtime. It is also not very good for their digestion. Try to give your child as little to drink as you can in the evening and avoid caffeinated drinks as it may cause them to wake in the night to use the toilet.

Technology

- The white light from the television, laptop, tablet, computer games or mobile phones can keep your child alert and their brain active. Try and avoid them for 90 minutes before bed.

Relaxing

- Many children can struggle to relax and so sometimes we need to help them to find what is relaxing to support their bedtime routine. Try a warm bath, or massage, play some calming music, or read a book, to help them wind down.

Please find below a link to the Evelina Hospital's website, which has also shared some top tips on maintaining a good sleep routine.

<https://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/our-services/hospital/sleep-medicine-department/coronavirus-sleep-tips.aspx>