

Improving Your Child's Sleep

Mental Health Support Team



Session outline



- Consider consequences of a lack of sleep.
- To understand the science behind sleep.
- To understand the factors that may promote sleep in children.
- To understand how to create a sleep plan for your child.



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Fun facts about sleep

- Otters hold hands when they are asleep to stop them from floating away.
- Python needs up to 19 hours of sleep a day



Fun facts about sleep

- Mariah Carey claims she needs 15 hours of sleep in order to perform.



Fun facts about sleep

- Athletes and sports team hire sleep specialists to help with their performance. Even Rotherham football club has their own 'sleep geek'.

Sleep geek



Sleeplessness in Children



- Children's sleep problems are very common.
- At some stage about 50% of children have a sleep problem considered to be significant by their parents.
- About 4% of children have a formal sleep disorder diagnosis.
- Children with a chronic physical illness like asthma or have a learning disability are those who are particularly prone to problems with sleep.



Sheffield Healthy Minds sleep data

In Sheffield between October 2017 and April 2020, 15,875 primary students (across 84 schools) and 9,374 secondary school students (across 17 schools) completed an online questionnaire.

Results:

37% of primary school children and 32% of secondary school children reported that sleep difficulties were the biggest problem for them.



Possible effects of poor sleep

For the Parent:

- Mental Health (e.g. stress and anxiety)
- Poor health
- Headaches
- Poor parent-child relationship

For the Child:

- Hyperactivity
- Poor memory and cognitive ability (concentration)
- Lowers immune system
- Weight/growth issues
- Ability to meet their full potential
- Hormonal problems
- Behavioural problems



“If you could manufacture a pill that could improve your cognitive function, that improved your emotional regulation, that stopped you reaching for the biscuit tin in the afternoon, you’d be a millionaire. That is what sleep can help you with. It’s free and available to us all.”

Catherine Hill, Consultant Paediatrician, Southampton Children’s Hospital



How much sleep does a child need?

Age	Average number of hours needed at night	Average number of hours needed during day
12 months	11 ½	2 ½
2 Years	11 ¾	1 ¼
3 Years	11	1
4 Years	11 ½	-
5 Years	11	-
6 Years	10 ¾	-
7 Years	10 ½	-
8 Years	10 ¼	-
9 Years	10	-
10 Years	9 ¾	-



Age	Average number of hours needed at night	Average number of hours needed during day
11 Years	9 ½	-
12 Years	9 ½	-
13 Years	9 ¼	-
14 Years	9	-
15 Years	8 ¾	-
16 Years	8 ½	-

- This information is a guide- we are all individual with the amount of sleep we need and children are the same. If you are unsure how much sleep you child needs a sleep diary can be useful.

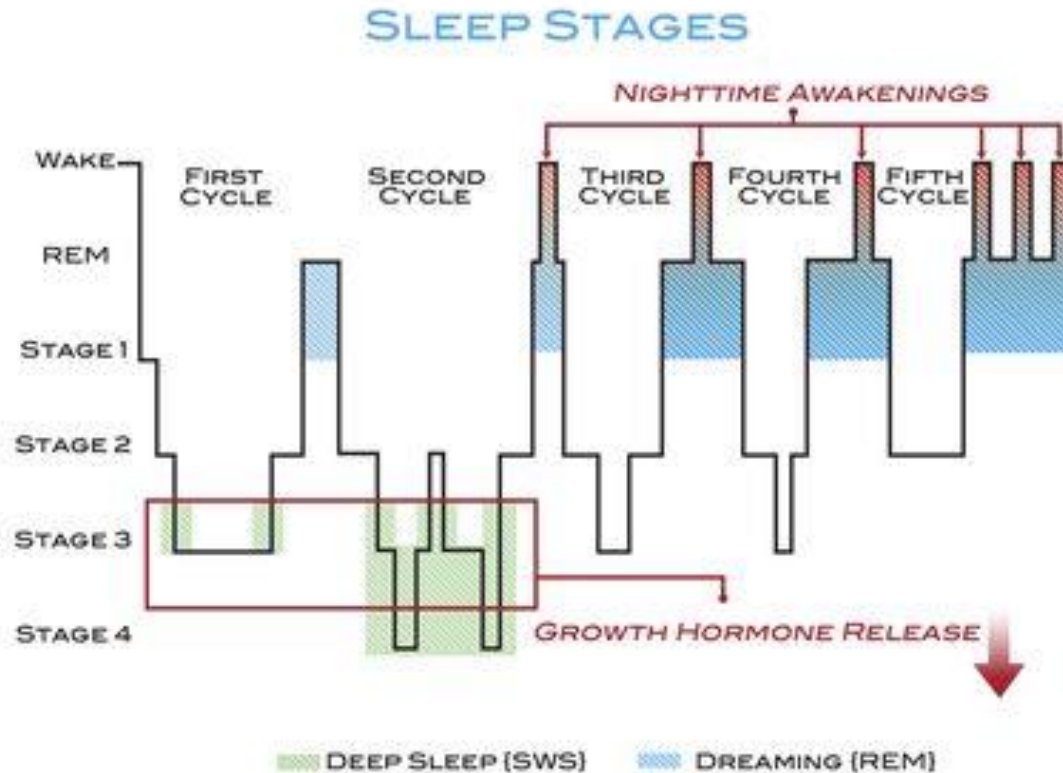


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Stage 1 (N1)

A very light sleep where your child will be easily woken. If parents tip-toe out of their child's room and they wake up it is because they were in a light sleep.

Stage 2 (N2)

Still a light sleep but the body is preparing for the deep sleep that is about to come. The child will be more relaxed. Now is a good time to sneak out of their room!

Stage 3 (N3)

This is a very deep sleep. The body needs this sleep so that repair can take place. The child is difficult to wake at this stage.

REM sleep

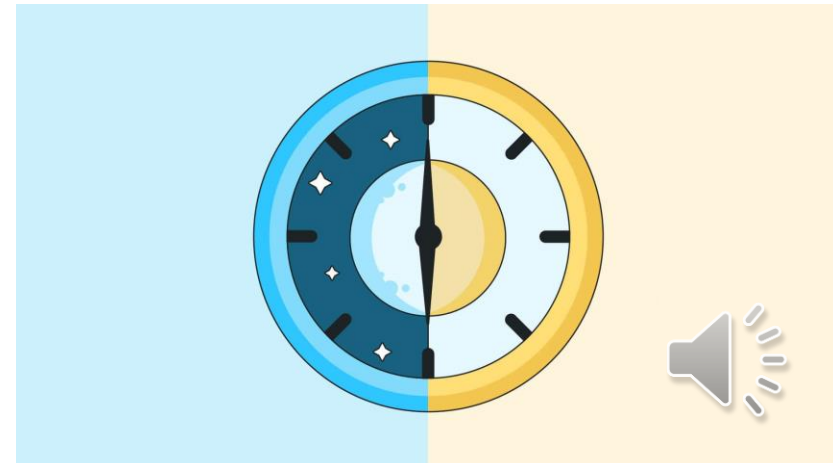
Increased heart rate and brain activity. Stage of sleep where we dream



Sleep Regulation

Regulation of sleep and wakefulness:

- Sleep Drive
- Circadian Rhythms
- Melatonin



So what does the science mean practically?

- The science behind sleep can help us getting the most out of sleep!
- A consistent environment will help us stay asleep.
- Consistent bedtimes and wake times will help our body clocks know when to be sleepy.
- A dark environment will help us become sleepy and sleep.



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Overcoming common sleep issues for children and young people

- Bedroom Routines
- Hunger / Thirst
- Bedroom Environment
- Worrying / anxiety



Overcoming Common Sleep Issues: Bedtime Routines

- Can have great benefits once established
- Be consistent
- Be predictable
- Plan them in advance



What does a good routine look like?

- Needs to start one hour before bed
- No screen time
- Dim lighting in the hour before bed
- Light bed time snacks
- Relaxing Activities
- Bath / shower
- Quick and boring good night / check ins



Bedtime routine Example

It should be simple, easy to understand and achievable.

- 7.00pm No screens, dim the lights, light snack
- 7.10pm Colouring in or jewellery making in kitchen
- 7.30pm Bath
- 7.50pm Book in bed
- 8.00pm Lights out

MY * BEDTIME * ROUTINE

	TAKE A BATH
	PUT ON PAJAMAS
	COMB HAIR
	BRUSH TEETH
	READ A BOOK
	GO TO BED

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Bedtime routines and weekends/holidays

- Bedtimes should be as consistent throughout the week as possible- including at weekends.
- During the school holidays bedtimes can slip- top tip around this is to make sure that you bring back the bedtime to where they need to be before school restarts.



Overcoming Common Sleep Issues:

Hunger / Thirst

- Hunger or thirst can stop us from getting sleep-as can being too full!
- It is important to make sure your child is hydrated throughout the day to ensure they are not thirsty at night.
- Equally some food should be avoided before bed as they can affect our sleep:
- Avoiding caffeine in drinks and snacks (like cola and chocolate)
- Avoid sugary snacks



Sleepy snacks

Below is a list of foods that research has found to help us sleep:

- Almonds
- Bananas
- Dairy
- Oatmeal
- Cherries
- Cereal

It's a myth that cheese will give you nightmares and keep you awake.



Overcoming Common Sleep Issues:

A sleep-friendly bedroom environment

A sleep friendly bedroom will be:

- A bed that is just for sleeping (not for laptops or gaming)
- Limit electronics
- Dark
- Quiet
- Tidy
- Temperature
- Free of distractions
- Comfortable – bedding, ventilation, decoration



Overcoming Common Sleep Issues:

Worry and Anxiety

Often children can be kept awake at night due to worrying thoughts or not being able to relax. Parents can help with this by:

- Being warm and empathetic
- Try comforting objects
- Massage / wrapping
- Introduce worry time
- Journaling
- Relaxation techniques – loads on YouTube



What if my child won't go to sleep without me?

- Sometimes children can become dependant on a parent being there to get to sleep.
- Try and reduce this in a step by step transition.
- Bedtime should be boring and check-ins should be boring.
- 'it is time for bed' can help with boundaries, discouraging play.



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Creating your own Sleep Plan

- How much sleep does your child need?
- What time does your child need to wake up in a morning? Work backwards to determine the time that your child should be going to sleep.
- Choose a strategy that will work for you and your family.
- Consider if there are any other changes you would like to make e.g. introduction of nightlight / blackout curtains etc.
- Decide when you will start using your plan.
- Consider keeping a sleep diary to identify things that make it more difficult / easier for your child to get to sleep.



Sleep diaries can help

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Sleep Diary: MORNING

Complete each morning

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
Day of the week							
What time did you go to bed last night?							
What time did you wake this morning?							
How long did it take you to first fall asleep (in minutes)?							
Did you fall asleep: Easily After some time With difficulty							
How many times did you wake in the night?							
How long were you awake during the night in total?							
How long did you sleep last night in total?							
What disturbed your sleep? (physical or mental factors such as stress, worry, noise, lights, comfort etc)							
How would you rate your quality of sleep from 1-5? (with 1 being very poor and 5 being very good)							
How do you feel this morning: Refreshed OK Lethargic							
Any other notes							

For sleep tips and other helpful advice visit www.sleepcouncil.org.uk

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Sleep Diary: END OF DAY

Complete at the end of the day

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
Day of the week							
How many caffeinated drinks did you have BEFORE 5pm?							
How many caffeinated drinks did you have AFTER 5pm?							
How many alcohol units did you have BEFORE 5pm?							
How many alcohol units did you have AFTER 5pm?							
In minutes, how much exercise did you do today BEFORE 9pm?							
In minutes, how much exercise did you do today AFTER 9pm?							
Have you taken any medications today? And if so, what.							
Did you have a nap during the day or evening and for how long? (in minutes)							
Throughout the day have you felt any of the following: Grumpy Impatient Tired Moody Unable to concentrate							
In the hour before bed what has your bedtime routine included?							

For sleep tips and other helpful advice visit www.sleepcouncil.org.uk



Things to remember....

- Consistency throughout the week including weekends.
- It can take several weeks for a child to learn a new routine and behaviour. It can be easy to fall into bad habits so the whole house sleep, but putting in the work around sleep routines will pay off.
- Behaviour may become more difficult at first and there may be knock backs.
- Keep positive and use lots of praise and encouragement.
- Not all strategies will work for every child.



Seeking additional support

We would recommend seeking support from your GP if:

Your child has had sleep difficulties for a long period of time and you have tried strategies around sleep and they are not helping.

Your child's sleep is affecting their daily life in a way which makes it difficult for them to manage.

You are concerned about their daily wellbeing and health due to their sleep difficulties.



Questions or comments

