

Strategies for challenges related to sleep

General Information: Most people wake between 4-5 times per night. This is normal! We generally do not remember this, unless the conditions around us have changed. If the conditions have changed (e.g. the light was on and now is off, parents were in the room and now are out or vice versa or child fell asleep on sofa/parent's bed and is now in their own bed) this means we will fully wake up.



General Strategies:

- Develop a consistent calming routine before bedtime with quiet activities at the same time every night.
- Make sure the TV or any electronics are switched off at least an hour before bedtime as the blue light in them blocks melatonin (the sleep hormone), making children stay awake
- Have milk and a banana about an hour before bed
- Do quiet fine motor activities as these help produce melatonin
- 30 minutes before bed have a bath or a cuddle in a warm towel or blanket
- Get into pyjamas, brush teeth, go to the toilet and go into the bedroom 15 minutes before bed time
- Use of relaxation music or story tapes
- Lie in bed, read a story, kiss goodnight
- Make sure your child is not still drinking a bottle when they fall asleep
- Make sure the child is awake when you leave the room.
- Visual support system – bedtime routine
- Reward system/sticker chart



Specific strategies for children with poor body awareness

- Use a heavy blanket/double duvet or even a sleeping bag to provide greater body awareness and a snug environment
- Use a double sheet and tuck it in tightly around your child and/or swaddle them.
- Onesie pyjamas
- Massage/back rubs/bear hugs before bed
- Have cuddly toys/extra pillows in bed with the child
- Position the bed against the wall so your child can squish themselves against the wall if desired

Specific strategies for children with visual sensitivities

- Avoidance of bright bedroom colours (use pastels), patterns or lots of pictures on the walls
- Black out blinds
- Minimise clutter at bedtime i.e. tidying toys into box
- Bed tent
- Dim lighting as getting ready for bed



Specific strategies for children with touch sensitivities

- High cotton count sheets for smoother surface
- Ensure bedding is smooth – e.g. no beads, iron-on prints etc
- Try different types of pyjamas – seamless (wear inside out), silky, fleecy
- Remove any labels in sleepwear
- Massage/back rubs/bear hugs before bed

Specific strategies for children with noise sensitivities

- Play white noise from a special machine or electronic music device
- Avoid ticking clocks, dripping taps, leaving devices on standby as they make a noise
- Minimise noise in the house

For further advice, please contact <http://www.thechildrenssleepcharity.org.uk/>