

CHILD MENTAL HEALTH FOR PRIMARY CARE



Helping Kids and Families with Sleep Hygiene

Issue

Lack of quality sleep can be a tremendous problem for your patients and their families. When individuals are well-rested, they have more control over their emotions and respond to each other in a way that enhances and improves relationships. The role of sleep is often underestimated in our patients' lives, so we encourage providers to utilize and share this general sleep information to help patients achieve the sleep they need for optimum physical, mental, and relational health.

Strategies

- A fixed bedtime and wake time throughout the week and weekend works well to facilitate quality sleep.
- Changes in weekend bedtimes and wake times create a lag and takes more than a few days to fully recover the sleep lost.
- Establish a nighttime routine early including a disconnect from screens, dimming the lights, a warm bath or shower, or other quiet activities that help the body and mind transition to sleep. This routine can begin as early as an hour prior to bedtime. Additionally, exposure to morning sun as soon as possible helps keep the circadian rhythm organized.
- Once a child's regular nap routine has subsided, naps should not be longer than 30 minutes and should ideally not occur so late that they interfere with bedtime.
- Encourage patients to abstain from other activities in bed other than sleep. Watching TV and playing video games in bed should be discouraged.
- If possible, keep the temperature in the home cool, researchers recommend between 62-82 degrees without considering bedding (Caddick et al., 2018). Hot showers or baths prior to bed may pull the body's internal heat towards the surface and help cool the body which would help prepare for sleep (Haghayegh et al., 2019).
- Depending on the intensity of the sleep difficulties consider referring patients to a nutritionist to examine the quality of food being ingested throughout the day and the timing of nutritional intake.

Strategies Continued

- Adolescents experience a biological shift in their body that fosters their ability to stay up late and sleep later. Help caregivers and adolescent patients understand the developmental shifts in sleep patterns and balancing that shift with the demands of the school day.
- Reducing noise as much as possible may help lessen disturbances. If external noise is beyond the patient's control, ear plugs may be worn as long as they fit well, or ambient noise, white noise or sleep machines may also help drown out external noise (Zhou et al., 2012).
- Reducing or eliminating caffeine at least in the afternoon/evening hours may also help patients fall asleep.
- Regular exercise can positively impact total sleep time, the ability to fall asleep, and the quality of sleep (Kredlow et al., 2015).

Resources and References

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/>

Caddick, Z. A., Gregory, K., Arsintescu, L., & Flynn-Evans, E. E. (2018). A review of the environmental parameters necessary for an optimal sleep environment. *Building and Environment*, 132, 11–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.buildenv.2018.01.020>

Haghayegh, S., Khoshnevis, S., Smolensky, M. H., Diller, K. R., & Castriotta, R. J. (2019). Before-bedtime passive body heating by warm shower or bath to improve sleep: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Sleep Medicine Reviews*, 46, 124–135. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2019.04.008>

Kredlow, M. A., Capozzoli, M. C., Hearon, B. A., Calkins, A. W., & Otto, M. W. (2015). The effects of physical activity on sleep: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 38(3), 427–449. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-015-9617-6>

Zhou, J., Liu, D., Li, X., Ma, J., Zhang, J., & Fang, J. (2012). Pink noise: Effect on complexity synchronization of brain activity and sleep consolidation. *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, 306, 68–72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtbi.2012.04.00>