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Psychology & Counseling**

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Guidelines for a Good Night's Sleep

Adapted from *The Anxiety Phobia Workbook*, 3rd Ed., Edmund J. Bournes, Ph.D.



The following guidelines are recommended to help your child improve both the quality and amount of his/her sleep.

1. Encourage your child to exercise during the day. Aerobic exercise (20 minutes or more) can help your child sleep at night. Boredom impairs sleep.
2. Get your child to go to bed and get up at regular hours, even if he/she is tired in the morning. Don't vary the time of going to bed or getting up. Pick intervals to check on your child and let them know you are doing this.
3. Avoid heavy meals before bedtime and going to bed hungry (a small snack before bedtime may be helpful). Food that help sleep: warm mild, B-complex vitamins, magnesium and calcium, L-tryptophan/high protein foods and a well-balanced diet. Foods that impede sleep: Caffeine, fatty and spicy foods, MSG and gas producing foods.
4. Develop a sleep ritual before bedtime. This is some activity you do every night before you go to bed. For example, a hot shower or bath before bedtime may help you relax.
5. Dimming the lights in the house stimulates a natural chemical in the brain which helps to induce sleep. Therefore, avoid artificial lights like that from the computer or television at least a half an hour before sleep.
6. For relaxing tense muscles or a racing mind, use deep relaxation techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation or a guided visualization on tape. Get an auto-reverse recorder that can play a tape in a continuous loop. See recommended reading list for relaxation audios for children.
7. Eliminate non-sleep activities in bed (such as work or reading) to strengthen the association between bed and sleeping—unless these activities are part of your child's sleep ritual.
8. Try varying the firmness of your child's mattress by buying a new one or adding a board underneath, a featherbed or an egg-crate foam pad.
9. Reduce noise through the use of a noise-masking machine.
10. Keep your child's room temperature between 60 and 70 degrees. Too warm or cold a room tends to interfere with sleep. Use fans for a hot room if air conditioning is unavailable.
11. If you suspect that emotional problems are causing your child's sleeplessness, consult a competent psychotherapist. Depression and anxiety disorders commonly produce insomnia. Getting more emotional support and expressing feelings often will help your child get to sleep.