



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board

NEURODEVELOPMENTAL SERVICE

Sleep Hygiene

It is estimated that 1 in 4 children will experience sleep difficulties at some point. Sleep problems are more common in children with additional needs. There is also a link between behavioural difficulties and poor sleep.



Sleep problems can be categorised into three groups:

- 1) *Sleep settling issues* – how long it takes to fall asleep, difficulties around co-sleeping
- 2) *Night-time awakenings* – waking frequently during the night
- 3) *Early morning awakenings* – waking before 06:00.

- ✓ Sleep hygiene involves a regular and predictable bedtime routine each night. It is important to be consistent with your child for them to learn the rules/routines. A calming wind down period should be used 30 minutes prior to starting the bedtime routine.



- ✓ This should not include watching TV, playing on computers or using mobile phones. Melatonin, our sleep hormone, is produced by the Pineal gland when it becomes dark and can be affected by the 'blue light' emitted from these devices.
- ✓ Showers are not recommended close to bedtime. Having a shower can encourage blood to move around the body which can reduce the effect of Melatonin, the hormone which makes us feel sleepy. It is better to have a bath if you can as having a bath can be calming and help us to relax and start to feel sleepy.
- ✓ Children should be encouraged to fall asleep in their own bed/bedroom and to self-settle without parents being present. If children require parental support during the sleep settling period, there is a stronger likelihood that the child will wake in the night.
- ✓ It is important to be consistent and stick to bedtime routines even on weekends and during the holidays. Keeping to the same bedtime and morning waking times will help to strengthen your child's/young person's body clock
- ✓ Use lots of praise/rewards to establish positive bedtime changes.

If your child continues to experience, sleep onset, night-time awakenings and early morning awakening difficulties. A health Professional can refer you and your child to the 'Sleep Clinic' (**using the referral form.**)

Sleep clinics

You may be asked to attend a sleep workshop and/or specialist face-to-face clinic appointment. Here you will complete a sleep history assessment with the specialist practitioner. You will then be asked to keep a sleep diary for a 2-week period - this on completion/return will be thoroughly analysed. The data from the diary will provide a picture of your child's sleep profile that will determine sleep intervention; generally a written sleep programme.

If appropriate your child will be asked to wear a specialist sleep watch (actigraphy). This device provides a more detailed profile of your child's sleep profile.

For further support and advice please find links below:

Sleep Scotland support - <https://www.sleepscotland.org/support/gateway-to-good-sleep/>

Cerebra sleep support - <https://cerebra.org.uk/?s=sleep>

Chris Catheral

Clinical Nurse Specialist in Childrens Sleep/behaviour, Child & Adolescent Health