

## Pediatric Sleep Hygiene

Instruction for good sleep hygiene include the following:

- Sleep only when sleepy. If a child is not sleepy, reading in the bed with a dim light might be an option for some families. This reduces the time the child is struggling with initiating sleep.
- If the child can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, allow him or her to do something boring until the child feels sleepy. The child should not be exposed to bright light after bedtime
- Minimize the child's naps. This will optimize the probability that the child will be tired at bedtime. If the child requires a nap, allow less than 1 hour of sleep, before 3 pm if possible. Lights should remain on during naps.
- The child must adhere to approximately the same wake-up time and bedtime 7 days a week. Older children might be able to sleep late on weekends and still fall asleep earlier on Sunday night, but the hallmark of children with DSPS is they can't. Children with the same wake-up time every morning will be more stable emotionally and less oppositional in the morning than children who sleep late on weekends.
- A quiet time with minimal light and less activity should precede bedtime. Television and computer monitors should be avoided. Maximize active playing and exercise is recommended to help you sleep well, but the timing of the workout is important. Exercising in the morning or early afternoon will not interfere with sleep.
- Every child deserves a consistent bedtime. As much as a child protests, a set bedtime, similar to a home-cooked meal, is appreciated by the child as a basic component of good parenting.
- Develop sleep rituals for your child. Children's sleep enhanced by rituals, such as reading stories, quiet games, a drink or just chatting. Having a set time for bathing and getting into pajamas helps a child prepare for sleep. It is important to give your child cues that it is time to slow down and prepare for sleep.
- Allow your child to use his or her own bed only for sleeping. Refrain from permitting your child to use the bed to watch TV, do homework, or use the computer. The child then knows that when it is time to go to the bed, it is time to sleep.
- Avoid all foods or beverages with caffeine after lunch. This includes chocolate and many beverages with caffeine after lunch. Coffee, tea, cola, cocoa, chocolate, and some prescription and nonprescription drugs contain caffeine.
- Some children benefit from a light snack before bed. For these children, if their stomachs are too empty, it can interfere with sleep. However, if your child eats a heavy meal before bedtime, this can interfere as well. Dairy products and turkey contain tryptophan, which acts as a natural sleep inducer. A warm glass of milk is sometimes recommended probably because of its tryptophan content.
- Give your child a hot bath 90 minutes before bedtime. A hot bath will raise your child's body temperature, but it is the drop in the body temperature that may leave you feeling sleepy.
- Make sure your child's bed and bedroom are quiet and comfortable. A hot bedroom can be uncomfortable. A cooler room along with enough blankets to stay warm is recommended. Too many blankets can overheat a child even in a cold room.