

## Bedtime

Sometimes children have trouble going to sleep when we want them to. They may avoid getting in bed, get out of bed repeatedly to ask for water, snack, etc., or they may stay in bed but not go to sleep. The next day they do not want to get up and are tired and irritable.

Young children (ages three to ten) need about ten hours of sleep a night. If they don't get this sleep they are grumpy, irritable, and unable to focus. Some studies have shown that when they don't get enough sleep many children show the symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The truth of the matter is we can not make a child go to sleep. However, the following suggestions may be helpful.



**During the Day** – Plenty of physical activities, such as swinging, running, jumping, etc.

**Avoid Exciting Activities Just Before Bedtime** – Avoid engaging in exciting activities, including exciting TV or video games, within a ½ hour of bedtime.

**Healthy Diet** – A well balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables.

**No Caffeinated Beverages** - Don't give your child caffeinated drinks, such as coke, particularly within two hours of bedtime.

**Regular Bedtime** – Have a regular bedtime. While life can be chaotic and unpredictable, children respond best to a predictable routine. As much as possible have children go to bed and get up at the same time each day. Remember to plan for your child to get ten hours of sleep and have bedtime be at least ten hours before the time you want them to get up in the morning. In other words, if you want your child to get up at 6:00 a.m. they need to be in bed and ready to go to sleep at 8:00 p.m.

**Anticipate Excuses to Get Up** – Try to anticipate all the excuses a child will have to get up after they go to bed and address it before they get in bed.

**Consistent Nighttime Routine** – Children need a consistent nighttime routine that is followed most nights. An example could be, dinner, brush teeth, fun time, wind down time, bath time, get dressed for bed, get in bed, story time, sleep time.

**Story Time** – Prior to Bath and Bedtime is a good time to sit down with your child in your lap and read them a story.

**Warm Bath** – It is helpful to give the child a warm bath to help them relax just before they go to bed.

**Good Night Ritual** – Establish a good night ritual that you and your child follow each night. For example, tuck them in, give them a kiss on the forehead, and say, "I love you, good night, sleep tight."

**Soft Music** – Turn on soft music your child can listen to as they go to sleep. This covers up any back ground noise, gives them something to focus on, and helps them to relax.

