



Importance of Sleep

Sleep is an essential building block for children's mental and physical health. It plays a crucial role in growth and development of learning, memory, attention, cognitive performance, and has a direct effect on happiness.

General Bedtime Tips

- Maintain a consistent bedtime routine that ends in the child's bedroom (can incorporate visual schedule)
- Engage in quiet play instead of movement-based play before bed
- Turn off electronics one hour before bedtime
- Avoid watching scary shows or movies before getting ready for bed
- Avoid caffeine four to six hours before bedtime
- Avoid heavy or spicy foods four hours before bedtime

Use your child's bed only for sleep so they positively associate it with sleeping and rest.



Sensory Considerations

Visual

- Read a book
- Use warm, dim lights (i.e. night lights, star lights, lava lamp)
- Reduce visual clutter (i.e. put toys away, bed tent/fort)

Auditory

- Play soft calming music (i.e. nature sounds, Mozart, lullabies)
- Sound or white noise machine
- Reduce loud sounds (i.e. earplugs, quiet hours)

Olfactory

- Using calming scents in the bath, diffuser, essential oils, lotion, etc. (i.e. lavender, chamomile, peppermint, rosemary, or bergamot orange)

Tactile

- Deep pressure (i.e. massage, burrito blanket)
- Warm bath
- Use preferred texture and material of pajamas
- Use preferred texture and material of sheets
- Weight of blanket (i.e. heavy, light, no blanket)

Proprioceptive

- Heavy muscle work throughout the day

Vestibular

- Slow rhythmic movement before bed (i.e. rocking)

Encourage the use of a security object, such as a blanket or stuffed animal.



Tips for Introducing Food

Gustatory/Oral Motor

- Consume a light snack containing protein and complex carbohydrate (i.e. cheese and whole-wheat cracker) within two hours of bedtime
- Warm drink at bedtime (i.e. warm milk, non-caffeinated tea)
- Deep breathing

Temperature

- Cooler room temperatures can help with falling asleep quicker and staying asleep

Interoception

- Use bathroom before laying down for bed

Make the bedroom environment the same every night and throughout the night.

How Can an Occupational Therapist Help?

- Develop a bedtime routine and visual schedule
- Support regulation before and during bedtime
- Understand and support your child's sensory preferences

Consult with your occupational therapist for an individualized plan to meet your child's needs

