

Helping Your Child Sleep Well

during the COVID-19 pandemic

Sleep is a time for the body to consolidate learning, establish memory and grow. Children who lack sleep may have poor attention, hyperactivity and difficulty with memory-related tasks.

Those with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder are likely to have inadequate and disrupted sleep. **Dr Aishworiya Ramkumar**, Consultant at Child Development Unit, National University Hospital shares some ways to help your child sleep well.



Have a daily routine

Keep it as similar as possible to your pre-circuit breaker routine. Keep nap timings consistent, ideally before 4pm, and bedtime similar on weekdays and weekends.



A bedtime routine

This is a sequence of a few steps (e.g. showering, wearing pyjamas and reading a bedtime story) that are done in the same order prior to bedtime, by the same caregiver.

Use a visual schedule to depict bedtime

This helps children understand the bedtime routine. Use pictures to show individual bedtime steps.

A conducive environment for sleep

Many children, especially those with special needs, are affected by the slightest sound and light. Keep the room quiet and dark.

Use reward charts to promote good sleep

For example, a sticker is earned for every day that the child goes to bed on time without a struggle. Accumulating stickers gets them an eventual reward.



Address anxiety and fears

Children may feel anxious from what they hear and see, which may interfere with sleep. Discuss their fears, answer questions and acknowledge changes around them.

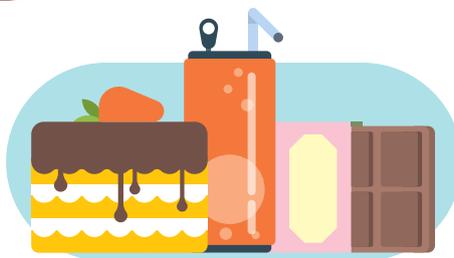
Be aware of how much sleep your child needs

This will help you plan a realistic routine. Children aged 3-6 years old should get about 10-12 hours of sleep a day.



Incorporate physical activity

Set aside time for indoor exercises such as stretching or yoga, which promote healthy sleep habits.



Avoid caffeine-rich food

Intake of food like soft drinks and chocolates can make children extra active and make it harder for them to fall asleep.



Avoid screen time prior to bedtime

Stop using electronic devices 1.5 hours prior to bedtime as it can cause children to take a longer time to fall asleep.

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