

MHST NEWSLETTER: SLEEP

Psychoeducation



Sleep is something we all do, but why is it so important?

Sleep affects our concentration, memory, emotional regulation, and ability to empathise. Sleep is also necessary for repairing cells and muscles, fighting illness, and regulating hormones.

As sleep is so necessary for our brain and body, it's important we get enough of this. Our diagram shows how much sleep is recommended for each age group. However, it is important to remember that each young person is different and will need different amounts of sleep based on their daily activities.

Our circadian rhythm (body clock) controls when we go to sleep and wake up. It's important to be aware that teenagers body clocks are set later than adults and young children's, which means that they often struggle to sleep earlier than 11pm. As this can make getting up early tricky, its even more important to consider healthy sleeping habits.

This newsletter will run through some key tips around improving sleep quality.

If it takes more than 30 minutes to fall asleep or your child is waking multiple times at night (more than 1-2), it may be that some sleep strategies would be helpful.

Why we struggle to fall asleep and wake in the mornings? Difficulties with falling asleep come from the body and brain not being ready to relax and surrender to sleep. If your child is not tired at night, keeping a set bedtime and wake time can help children feel tired at night.

It may be that what your child is doing directly before bed is increasing their energy rather than calming down. For example, if children use screens before bed, the blue light (artificial sun light), increases alertness and prevents sleep hormones (melatonin) from being released.

Why we may wake a lot during the night? Environmental factors such as temperature, light, noise, and bed comfort can all lead to waking a lot in the night. Nightmares and night-time fears will also affect children's ability to stay asleep and in their beds as they may experience scary thoughts or Images which prevent them from being able to relax and turn off. Children can also wake a lot in the night if there are rewards; whether that be playing with their toys or getting attention from caregivers.

Top Tips

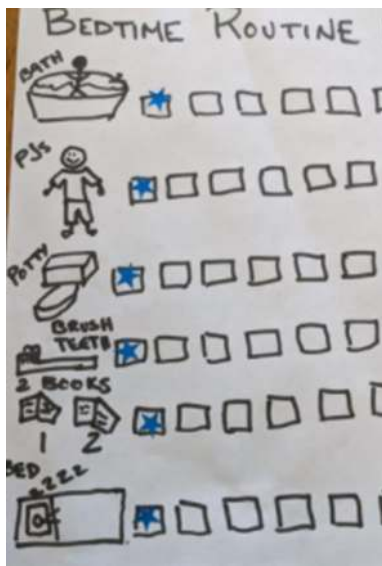


Strategies

Anxieties and stresses can also get in the way of being able to settle for sleep. Writing in a diary each day can help young people get these worries out of their minds before bed. If there are lots of 'what if' worries, having a set time each day where children can share these thoughts with someone can help them feel more contained and less likely to seep into bedtime. Keeping this time away from bedtime will help children let go of these thoughts before trying to sleep.

Ensuring bedtimes and waketimes don't vary more than 1 hour can help train the body clock to sleep and wake at the same time each day. Creating a bedtime routine can help signal to the body to start preparing for sleep; doing relaxing activities which aren't screen based (colouring, reading, podcasts), dimming lights and lowering noise can be really helpful. For younger children, rewards and a visual routine can help them buy into this strategy.

The sleeping environment can really impact our ability to sleep. Keeping the room and bed a cool temperature, reducing noise and light, and having comforting and cosy blankets/ toys can all improve sleep. Tidying away schoolwork can help young people detach from the day and reduce any school related stresses. It's also been found that our bed/ sleep connection can influence our ability to sleep, so if young people spend a lot of time in bed during the day doing schoolwork/ using face time, their bed becomes associated with being awake. We therefore recommend doing these activities outside of the bed or readjusting their bed (sitting the other way around) to break this association.



For further support in Brighton and Hove:

Mental Health Support Team: can offer one to one or group intervention for children and teens with sleep difficulties. Please contact your school SENCO or Emma Sharpe emma.sharpe@brighton-hove.gov.uk for further information.

Schools Wellbeing Service: can offer consultation and advice from Primary Mental Health Workers. Please email swsconsultationline@brighton-hove.gov.uk to organise an appointment.

Community Wellbeing Service: can offer one to one and group intervention for mild to moderate mental health difficulties. Please visit www.brightonandhovewellbeing.org for further information.

CAMHS: can offer intervention, assessments, and support for moderate to severe mental health difficulties. Please visit www.sussexcamhs.nhs.uk for further information.

Useful Websites:

www.e-wellbeing.co.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk

Signposting

Sleep Apps:

