

# Winthrop Pediatric Associates, PC

## Division of Pediatric Sleep Medicine



### Principles of Good Sleep Hygiene

#### **Maintain the Circadian (internal clock) drive to sleep at the desired time**

- **Sleep schedule-** Bedtime and wake-up time should be about the same time everyday. There should be no more than an hour difference bedtime and wake-up time between school nights and nonschool nights. Sleeping in on weekends to “catch up” on sleep should be avoided.
- **Naps –** In young children, naps should be geared to the child’s age and developmental needs. In older children and teens, naps should generally be avoided, as prolonged daytime sleep can contribute to difficulty initiating and maintaining nocturnal sleep.
- **Exercise –** Time should be spent outside every day, with a period of daily exercise.
- **Hot bath –** Some find this helpful. The bath should be within 2 hour prior to bedtime, last approximately 30 minutes and be sufficiently hot to raise your body temperature by 4° F.

#### **Minimize Circadian (internal clock) factors that can cause unwanted night-time alertness**

- **Avoid exposure to bright light at night.**
- **Sunlight –** Spending time outside every day, especially in the morning, and exposure to sunlight helps maintain normal sleep-wake circadian. Try to get at least 30 minutes of sunlight starting within 30 minutes of getting out of bed.

#### **Minimize counterproductive alerting processes in the sleep setting**

- **Bedtime routine –** Establish a consistent 20 to 30 minute bedtime routine. The routine should include calm activities, such as reading a book or talking about the day, with the last part occurring in the bedroom.
- **Meals –** Heavy meals within an hour or 2 of bedtime may interfere with sleep. However, a light snack (such as milk and cookies) before bed is acceptable to avoid going to bed hungry.
- **Evening activities –** The hour before bed should be a quiet and calm time. High energy activities and heavy exercise and stimulating activities, such as playing computer games, should be avoided during that time.
- **Electronic media –** Television sets, computers, etc. should be kept out of the bedroom to avoid establishing television viewing and playing video or computer games as a learned sleep-onset association. These activities are also often highly stimulating.
- **Bedroom –** The bedroom should be comfortable, quiet and dark, except for a dim nightlight. Room temperature should be cool (less than 75 degrees). Using the bed for activities (studying, talking on the phone) other than sleeping should be avoided.
- **Keep the clock turned away from you, and don’t find out what time it is when you get up at night.**

### Minimize drug effects that can cause insomnia

- **Caffeine** – Caffeine should be avoided for at least 3 to 4 hours before bed. Preferably, don't drink any caffeine after breakfast. Caffeine can be found in many types of soda, coffee, iced tea, and chocolate.
- **Alcohol** – Alcohol may shorten sleep onset but disrupts sleep later in the night and thus, should be avoided.
- **Smoking** – Nicotine is a stimulant and may disturb sleep.

### Some therapies which should improve your sleep:

#### 1. Stimulus control therapy

- Go to bed only when sleepy.
- Use the bedroom only for sleeping.
- Go to another room if unable to fall asleep within 15-20 minutes. Read or engage in a quiet (not alerting) activity. Return to bed only when sleepy. Repeat if necessary.
- Have a regular wake time regardless of the duration of sleep.
- Avoid daytime napping.

#### 2. Sleep-Restriction Therapy

- Reduce time in bed to estimated total sleep time (minimum: 5 hours).
- Increase time in bed by 15 minutes every 3- 4 days when estimated sleep efficiency (ratio of time asleep to time in bed) is at least 90%

#### 3. Relaxation Therapy

- Physical component: progressive muscle relaxation, biofeedback.
- Mental component: imagery training, meditation, hypnosis.



**Useful Websites:** <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/>  
<http://www.sleepeducation.com/>  
<http://www.sleepnet.com/>

**National Sleep Foundation**  
From the **American Academy of Sleep Medicine**  
“Everything you wanted to know about sleep but were too tired to ask”™