

## Children, Electronics and Sleep

The increasing prevalence of electronics in children's bedrooms creates a culture of evening engagement and light exposure that negatively impacts sleep time, sleep quality and daytime alertness. Literature shows that:



- Children using electronic media as a sleep aid to relax at night have been shown to have later weekday bedtimes, experience fewer hours of sleep per week and report more daytime sleepiness.
- Adolescents with a bedroom television have later bedtimes, more difficulty initiating sleep and shorter total sleep times.
- Texting and emailing after lights outs, even once per week, dramatically increases self-reported daytime sleepiness among teens.
- Not all electronic usage is recreational as the burden of homework is great for many of our children and their work is often completed on the computer, a significant light source late in the evening.
- Increased academic demands, busy social and extra curricular schedules and the lure of entertainment conspire to keep our children electronically engaged at night.

Many children are not fulfilling basic sleep requirements and adequate sleep is essential for growth, learning, mood, creativity and weight control. Understanding the influence of light and evening engagement on sleep is the first step in helping parents address the dilemma of electronics in the bedroom.



## **Primary Sleep & Relaxation Resources**



## The importance of sleep

Sleep is essential to humans, just like air, water and food. Sleep is important for:

- General physical health
- Restoring energy
- Repairing injuries or illness
- Growth
- Psychological well-being and mood
- Concentration, memory, and academic performance
- Getting along with others



## Top tips for sleep



- Go to bed the same time every night.
- Warm milky drinks before bed. Milk contains tryptophan which is a natural sleep inducer.
- Baths. Having a hot bath 1-2 hours before bedtime can be useful, as it will raise your body temperature, causing you to feel sleepy as your body temperature drops again. Research shows that sleepiness is associated with a drop in body temperature.
- Regular exercise can help to develop a good sleep pattern, although be careful not to do strenuous exercise 4 hours before bed as the hormones released when we exercise will still be present and may prevent being able to nod off effectively.
- The right space. It is very important that your bed and bedroom are quiet and comfortable for sleeping.
- Eat right. A healthy, balanced diet will help you to sleep well, but timing is important. Some people find that a very empty stomach at bedtime is distracting, so it can be useful to have a light snack,

## Audio books

Audio books can be downloaded on to tablets, i-pods and smart phones. Or are available on CDs.



A couple of recommended authors:

- Humphrey Carpenter- Mr Majeika. Aimed towards 5-8 year olds.
- Enid Blyton- Amelia Jane. Aimed at 5-8 year olds.
- JK Rowling - Harry Potter (Stephen Fry narrates this and is voice is very soothing)
- David Baddiel- Aimed at 9-12 year olds.
- David Walliams- Aimed at 9-12 year olds.

Audio books are good for creating imagery and assisting children in being able to relax and reduce stimulation from other sources. Although there tends to be a charge (as with books) they are a fun and enjoyable way to help children with sleep difficulties.

## Mindfulness Apps

<http://mindful-app.com/#Home>

Is a free App available for download.



Mindfulness for Children provides relaxing sounds of nature to help children calm down and improve focus/concentration. With descriptions and terms aimed at children, users are taken through body scans, visualizations and breathing exercises.