

# Healthy Sleep Healthy Me



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Dear Parent/Caregiver:

This booklet explains how you play an important role in helping your child learn healthy sleep habits. It will help you understand why sleep is important and how it can affect your child's growth and development. Please remember that every child is unique. Different children have different needs.



# Sleep Benefits

Just like healthy eating and physical activity, sleep helps a child's mind and body to grow and be healthy.

Sleep can affect your child's:

- **Energy to play and be physically active.**
- **Emotional Control to cope with feelings, emotions and make it easier to move between activities.**
- **Growth and Development to have a strong and healthy body.**
- **Resilience or how well your child is able to cope with life's ups and downs in a positive way.**
- **Learning and Memory by being more alert, less forgetful in school.**
- **Immune System to fight off infections and stay healthy.**

## Did you know?

Research says that children who do not get the sleep they need are more likely to develop health problems as adults such as:

- Type 2 Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart problems
- Gain more unhealthy weight



# What Happens During Sleep?



Muscle

A hormone is sent out to repair muscles and joints.



Brain

The brain works to clear away extra waste.



Stomach

What your child eats affects their digestion, how they sleep and how rested they feel.



Heart

The heart rate slows down and blood pressure lowers.



# What Can You Do To Help?

Healthy eating and exercise are important ways to improve your child's health and sleep habits.

You can encourage...

## Physical Activity:

- At least 60 minutes of activity every day
- A calming activity before bedtime

**Remember that an active child will sleep better at night.**



**Playing ball outdoors is a fun way to get active with your child!**

## Healthy Eating:

- Follow Canada's Food Guide
- Include a bedtime snack as part of a planned snacking routine (try cereal and milk or cheese and crackers)



**A low sugar cereal with milk is a great snack to have before bed!**

# Before I Sleep

Having the same routine before bed every night can help your child create healthy sleep habits. As your child does more for themselves, they may want to create their own sleep routine. Talking about their nightly routing is a great way to explore their sleep choices.

## Try This!


Working with your child to create a bedtime routine can be fun! Let your child choose the order of tasks they would like to do before bed. Ask them to decorate their personal routine as they would like! Post it beside their bed as a reminder.

	Task
	healthy snack
	pyjamas
	brush teeth
	story time
	hugs & kisses
	lights out

**You are the best teacher!**

Your child will learn from and copy your sleep habits. Sleep is important for everyone



A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a brown sweater, sitting on the edge of a white bed. She is holding an open book and looking down at it. Two young children are in the bed with her. A girl with dark hair, wearing a pink long-sleeved shirt, is sitting up and looking at the book. A boy with dark hair, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, is lying down behind her, also looking at the book. The bed has a white headboard and a yellow blanket. The background is a light blue wall.


## Sleep Routine Tips:

- Have the same bedtime and wake time every day including weekends and holidays.
- Help your child choose a healthy snack before going to bed.
- Read a story together.
- Follow the same routine every night (i.e., healthy snack, brush teeth, wash face, read book).
- Have your child pick out their own pyjamas.
- Turn off all electronics 2 hours before bedtime.
- Write the routine down or use pictures (if your child is not reading yet).
- Post the routine in your child's bedroom or bathroom.
- Use positive words to encourage your child to follow the routine.

**Remember, you are your  
child's best teacher.**

# Safety Is A Priority

Safety is always the first priority when your child sleeps. There are many ways you can make a safe sleep space for your child.

A young boy with brown hair, wearing a black, yellow, and blue striped shirt, is smiling and leaning over the side of a light-colored wooden bunk bed. His legs are sticking out from the top bunk.

### Bunk Beds

- A child must be at least 6 years old before sleeping on the top bunk.
- Only one child on the top bunk at a time.
- Don't attach ropes or cords to a bunk bed; they can strangle a child.
- Always use a ladder to get on and off the top bunk.



## Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- It is the law in Ontario to have a smoke detector on every level of your house, as well as outside all areas where people sleep.
- A carbon monoxide detector next to every sleep area is also required by law.
- Change batteries in battery operated detectors yearly.

### Did you know?

Children who do not get the sleep they need are:

- three times more at risk for injuries that need an emergency room visit.
- two times as likely to have sports injuries.



# Where I Rest My Head

Making your child's room the most comfortable place to fall asleep will help them get the sleep they need.



Limit noise in their room by closing a window or door. Keep the room electronic free.



Dim the lights an hour before bed. This tells their brain it's time for bed.



Surround your child with things that make them feel at ease. Allow them privacy to sleep.



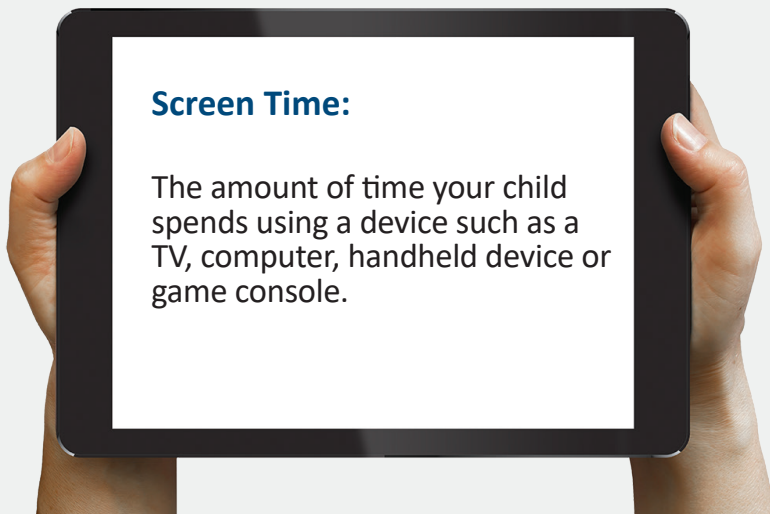
Keep the room temperature cool for sleep.

# The Age of Technology

Screen time can affect how well and long a child sleeps.

## Did you know?

Screens on computers, phones, TV's and handheld devices put off a blue glow. This blue glow lowers melatonin levels, an important hormone which helps with sleep and waking. The blue glow makes the body think it's daytime!



## Suggested Screen Time

4 years old:

Less than 1 hour every day

5 – 17 years old:

no more than 2 hours per day of recreational screen time

## Ways to have family time instead of screen time:

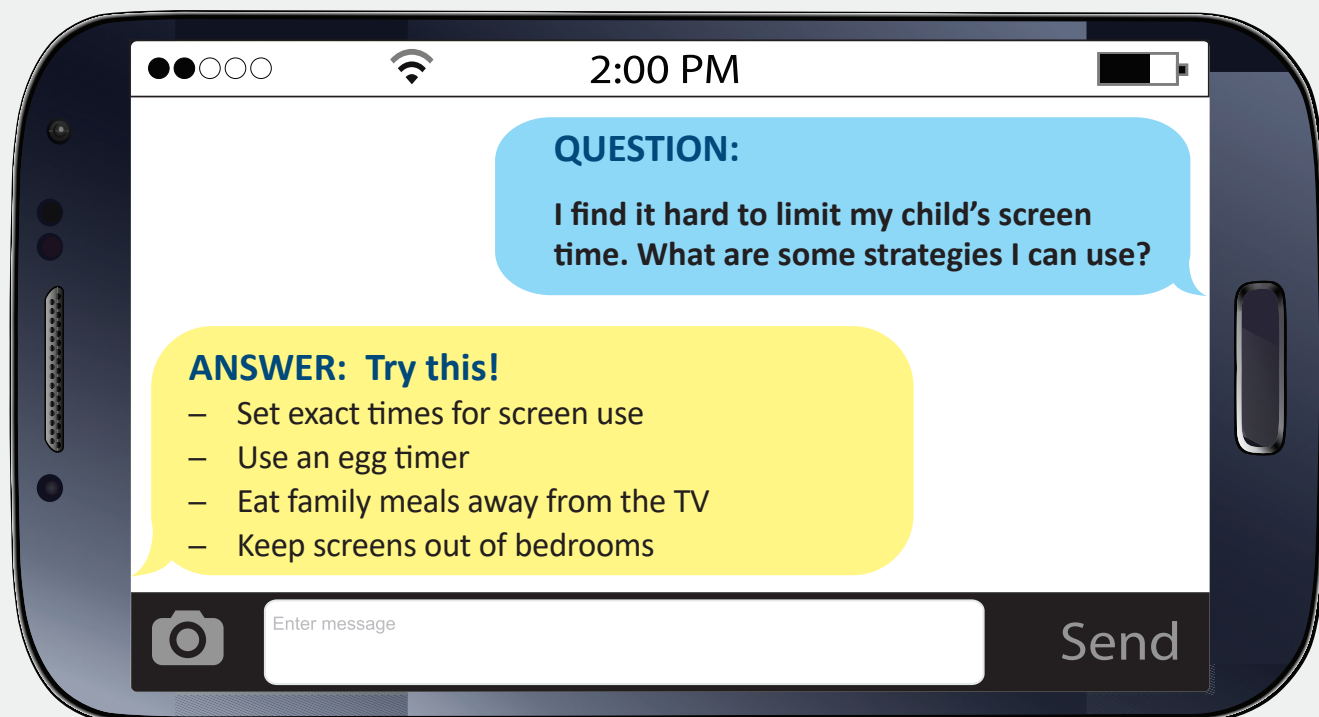
- Family game night
- Read a book out loud
- Go for a walk after dinner



# Screen Time

## What can you do to help?

- Talk as a family about the importance of limiting screen time.
- Decide as a family when to turn screens off for the night (2 hours before bedtime is suggested).
- Keep devices out of the bedroom.
- Agree to have electronics turned off at family time and mealtime.
- Check for information on [durham.ca/online-safety](http://durham.ca/online-safety).



# Is Your Child Getting Enough Sleep?



## Signs that your child may not be getting enough sleep:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Slow reaction time

**Speak with your health care provider if you are concerned about your child's sleep.**

# What Affects My Sleep?

## Starting School

Your **4 year old** needs 10 to 12 hours of sleep every night.

Starting school can be a whole new experience for you and your child. This can mean big changes in energy levels and sleep habits.



# Learning is Fun!

## School Days

The start of anything new can be stressful. As your child adjusts to a full day of learning they may feel excited, scared or anxious. These feelings can affect their sleep. Creating a strong positive connection with your child can help them learn ways to cope with these changes.

### You can...

- Set family time aside in the school week to spend time with them.
- Ask about their day and listen without giving advice or judgment.
- Give them your full attention when listening. This will help them feel understood and show you are interested.
- Become involved with the school community. (e.g. newsletters or school trips).





## Five Questions Game

Get involved in your child's day!

Ask 5 simple questions before bed. Get creative with your questions every night.

Here are a few examples:

1. What was the best part of your day?
2. What are some examples of how you were kind today?
3. What made you laugh the most?
4. Was there a part of your day that didn't feel right for you?
5. What made you feel good today?

# My Imagination and Dreams...

Some researchers believe that the reason we dream is to work through emotions and solve problems. Some dreams can be fun and silly, while others can be scary. Dreams, nightmares and night terrors are a normal part of childhood sleep.

	Nightmares	Night Terrors
<b>What is it?</b>	Scary dreams that wake your child and make them scared to fall back to sleep.	During deep sleep, they slightly awaken feeling extreme panic and fear.
<b>What would you see?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Happens during the early hours of the morning during light sleep.</li> <li>• Your child may wake crying or upset.</li> <li>• They are able to tell you what happened in their dream.</li> <li>• You can settle them back to sleep easily.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Happens in deep sleep, 1 – 2 hours after your child falls asleep.</li> <li>• You may hear your child talking, crying or screaming.</li> <li>• Their eyes may be open but they do not answer you.</li> <li>• You may see them sleepwalking.</li> <li>• They will be confused and hard to wake up.</li> <li>• Can last up to 30 minutes.</li> </ul>
<b>What can you do?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiet time with happy books and games is best before bed.</li> <li>• Give comfort and let them know they are safe.</li> <li>• Open their door to let some light in.</li> <li>• Have your child cuddle their favorite stuffed animal.</li> <li>• Ask your child to close their eyes and imagine a nice place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have calm/quiet time before bed. Low energy play is best.</li> <li>• Stay calm and wait it out. Wait for your child to wake on their own.</li> <li>• Clear clutter from around the bed to keep your child safe if sleepwalking occurs.</li> <li>• If sleepwalking happens, guide your child back to bed without waking.</li> </ul>

### Nightmare Activity

Ask your child to draw a picture of what scared them the most in their nightmare. Help your child write a letter to the scary “thing”.



Dear Monster,  
You really scared me last night. I did not like your three heads and big eyes. Please don't bother me again. I want to get a good night's sleep tonight.  
- Ben

### Meet Joseph

Joseph is four years old. His teacher reports that Joseph is having trouble listening at school and the mother, Tanya has said Joseph is having trouble sleeping at night from night terrors. Joseph is too scared to sleep in his own bed at night. Here is what Joseph's mother did to help him.

- Tanya asked about Joseph's fears. What did Joseph find scary in his room?
- Tanya reassured Joseph by using a flashlight to shine on the things that looked scary in the room. Was the “monster” real or just Joseph's chair?
- Joseph and Tanya made a sleep routine that included reading a book and asking the “Five Questions” game before bedtime with Joseph.
- Tanya gently settled Joseph back to sleep after a night terror by telling Joseph he was safe.
- Tanya used stickers as a reward for staying in his own bed at night. After 5 stickers, Joseph could choose a larger sticker.



# It Can Happen

## Bedwetting

Bedwetting can happen in deep sleep. Most children stop wetting the bed between the ages of 6 to 10 years. Bedwetting can be an uncomfortable topic to talk about with your child and can affect their self-esteem.

### You can help by:

- Asking them to use the washroom right before bed.
- Giving water up to two hours before bed.
- Having them wear pull-ups or training pants at night.
- Using bed pads or plastic mattress covers.
- Leaving a change of clothes beside their bed at night.
- Helping them wash in the morning.
- Talking to them about how they feel after bedwetting.
- Using positive words on both “dry” and “wet” nights.
- Reassuring them that they have done nothing wrong and it’s not their fault.
- Talking about bedwetting with your health care provider if you have any concerns.



# What Affects My Sleep?

**Getting enough sleep to deal with life's everyday changes.**

Your **5 to 9 year old** needs 9 to 11 hours of sleep every night.

School can be a wonderful place for your child to try new things and become more independent. Making friends, after school activities, and homework can often make life busier.



5 to 9 year olds

# How Am I Feeling?

## Day to Day Life at School

As your child learns and plays with friends more on their own, they may feel many emotions from excitement and joy to sadness or fear. Resiliency is your child's ability to cope with life's changing emotions and ups and downs in a positive way. Building resiliency can help them cope with stress so they can sleep well at night. Talking with your child daily can create a strong positive connection to help them cope with daily stress.

### You can.....

- Continue to use strategies listed for 4 year olds.
- Ask questions that encourage positive conversation (i.e., "How did the try out go today?" instead of "Did you make the team?").
- When talking to your child look in their eyes, lean in slightly, and nod your head to show you are listening to what they are saying.
- Focus on your child's feelings about a stressful event rather than how the event happened. Are they feeling angry, scared, or powerless about what is happening to them? Help them find ways to manage their feelings in a positive way.

### Try This!

Put a note in your child's lunch to show you are thinking about them!



# Balance is Key!

## Busy Lives

As your child grows, meets new friends, finds new interests and homework increases, their sleep may be impacted. They may find life becoming busier. Being busy can be helpful in learning many life skills! Being too busy can also make your child feel overwhelmed. The pressure from trying to keep up with after school activities may leave your child feeling tired. Help your child to find a balance with their daily activities.

### You can...

- Ask your child if they feel like they are doing too much.
- Agree as a family on how many after school activities your child can do.
- Make a family calendar to stay organized.
- Remember to plan time to relax together.

Preparing the night before a school day can be a great time saver.

You and your child will feel less rushed in the morning.

### Try this!

- The night before school, make their lunch together.
- Have your child pack their school bag.
- Encourage them to pick out their clothes for the next day.



# What Affects My Sleep?

## Getting enough sleep to cope with new changes

Your **10 to 13 year old** needs 9 to 11 hours of sleep every night.

Puberty is a time when your child's body goes through a lot of changes. These changes are happening in your child's body, mind and life. In girls, puberty can happen between the ages of 8 to 13 years and in boys, 9 to 15 years. These changes can greatly affect your child's sleep.

Waking up  
is really  
hard for  
me.

I love to  
have a  
nap after  
school.

I feel tired  
all day  
long.

I love to  
sleep in on  
weekends.

10 to 13 year olds



# Is It Nap Time Yet?

## How does it impact sleep?

At this age your child may not understand that being sleepy during the day may result from not getting enough sleep at night. Adolescents who do not get enough sleep may look like they are not interested, not listening, or in a bad mood. Help your child to get the sleep they need at night so they can stay alert during the day.

### You can....

- Encourage the same bedtime routine every night to prevent daytime sleepiness.
- Keep daytime naps to a maximum of 45 minutes even on weekends.
- Keep bedtimes and wake times on weekends within 2 hours of weekday bedtimes and wake times.
- Get bedtime back on track after holidays, by encouraging your adolescent to go to sleep 15 minutes earlier each night.



# Do I Have To Get Up?

## Staying Up Late and Sleeping In

Melatonin is an important hormone that tells the brain to go to sleep when it is dark. In the teen years, melatonin is released later in the night, causing your child to feel less sleepy at bedtime. As a result, bedtime becomes later making it harder to wake your child in the morning. Creating a bedtime routine with your child can help encourage relaxation and sleepiness earlier in the night.

### You can encourage...

- The same bedtime and wake time every day.
- Slowly move bedtimes earlier by 15 minutes if bedtime was getting too late.
- Limiting daytime napping.
- Limiting screen time before bed.
- Relaxing activities for the bedtime routine such as reading a book.
- Dimming the lights before bed. This tells the brain it's time to sleep.
- More light in the room in the morning. This tells the brain that it's time to get up.



### Try this!

Have your child keep a sleep diary. They can record what time they went to sleep, woke up and napped. Record this information for 1-2 weeks. This will help them understand their own sleep habits.

# Friends, Friends, Friends

## Social Life

As your child does more for themselves, more time may be spent with friends both in person and electronically. Talking, texting and gaming with friends can cause your child to feel many emotions. These feelings can delay sleep and make waking up in the morning more difficult. Help your child learn ways of working through social conflicts so they can get better sleep at night.

### You can...

- Continue to use strategies listed for 4 year olds and 5 to 9 year olds.
- Listen to your child and help them talk through problems. Advice or answers can sometimes be seen as a lecture.
- Ask them how they feel about what has happened so they can release their feelings.
- When listening, allow some silence to give your child time to think. Count to three before you talk. They may begin sharing more information about their thoughts and feelings.
- Clarify what your child is saying and the feelings you are picking up on. This gives your child the chance to correct and/or expand on what they are sharing with you.
- Thank them for sharing with you.

### Try This!

Being a parent can be stressful. Looking after yourself can help you and your child be resilient. Showing your child how you cope with stress is a great way to teach your child how to manage stress too.

### To Do

- *Make time for yourself*
- *Think positive thoughts*
- *Take care of your health*
- *Stay connected with people you care about*



HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT

Durham Health Connection Line  
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729  
[durham.ca/health](https://durham.ca/health)



If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

