

Sleep and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

Children on ADHD medication may experience sleep problems and are sometimes prescribed Melatonin at night. However, this is only effective when combined with good sleep routine.

Sleep and ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder)

Many ASD children experience sleep difficulties and this increases the likelihood of challenging and disruptive behaviour during the day. Difficulties are often based on the child's inflexibility around routines and behaviours that control and make unfair demands on parents and siblings.

Where can parents get help?

Discussing your child's difficulties with your doctor may be your first course of action. They may decide to prescribe a short course of Melatonin to help with the immediate problem particularly if the situation has become desperate. Your doctor may decide to refer your child to a paediatrician specialising in behaviour and sleep. Again they may prescribe Melatonin but often over longer periods of time. They may also give you advice about bedtime routines.

Alternatively, attending parenting classes can be very effective particularly when there are opportunities to network with other parents who are experiencing these difficulties.

FIVE-MINUTE GUIDES

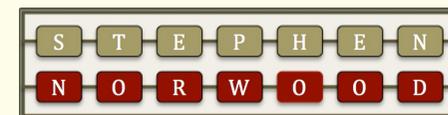
*These are designed to provide a brief introduction only.
Further advice and resources can be found on the website:*

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A Five-Minute Guide to Sleep



Sleep

What is sleep?

Sleep is a period of reduced consciousness where the muscles are relaxed and where various processes occur that are essential for physical and mental health. Sleep occurs in cycles lasting about one and half hours and during each cycle there are usually four phases with differing levels of brain activity.

Why is sleep important?

A third of our lives are spent sleeping and the reasons for this are not fully understood. However, we do know that sleep is important for repairing and reenergising our muscles; for processing our experiences of the day; and releasing and regulating hormones for growth, appetite and alertness. In addition, sleep appears to be a significant factor in how effective our immune system functions.

How much sleep do you need?

Age	Hours	Age	Hours
0	18+	10	10
1	14	11	9.5
2	13	12	9
3	12	13	9
4	11.5	14	9
5	11	15	9
6	11	16	8.5
7	10.5	17	8.5
8	10	18+	8
9	10		

The table gives average values and each individual will vary slightly. For example, adult daily needs tend to vary between 7 and 9 hours sleep though many cope (at a cost) on fewer than 7.

What are the problems with not enough sleep?

Not enough sleep can lead to difficulties with:

- Concentration and focus in lessons
- Poor memory and recall of learning
- Reduced problem-solving ability
- Irritability and conflict with peers
- Dietary and weight issues leading to increased risk of diabetes, cancer and heart disease
- Mental health issues

Studies show that as many as three quarters of children routinely do not get the recommended number of hours.

Why do children develop sleep problems?

Many factors may contribute to the risk of developing sleep difficulties and include:

- Insecure attachment
- Inconsistent bedtime routine
- Stressful events that trigger sleep disturbance
- Environmental factors such as bedroom too warm, too light, too noisy etc.
- Use of computer games and television prior to bedtime that release stress hormones

What makes a good bedtime routine?

- Keeping to the same daily bedtime including at weekends
- Avoiding TV or computer games and keeping light levels low for at least one hour before sleep time
- Avoiding eating meals and snacks before bedtime
- Calm and relaxing activities in the hour before sleep time
- Setting bedtime according to recommended hours needed
- Opportunities for exercise and fresh air during the day