

My Top 10 Tips for better sleep

The lack of sleep we experience as parents can be so debilitating and frustrating that sleep often becomes an obsession. It's important to remember that sleep is a physiological function and is a core need for the human body. The body needs to sleep and it will,

although sometimes it may not seem like that with children! While we can't force a child to sleep, we can work together to help this process along by optimizing their environment and our sleep behaviours, which can improve the sleep situation for your family.

1

There are no bad habits when it comes to sleep - only those that may feel unsustainable for you. If you love holding, feeding and rocking your baby to sleep then you should do just that. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise!

2

Support your child with sleep and be responsive to their needs -

this way you help them build a secure attachment with you. Secure attachment is a key building block for confident and independent children. Connecting with and comforting your baby and children is the best way to solidify their attachment with you.

3

Nighttime parenting is real and often forgotten -

according to research, 78.6% of babies from the ages of 6-12 months wake up at night and 61.4% would feed one or more times (Brown and Harries, 2015). Night waking is normal and natural and sometimes we need to reframe our perceptions of what a good night's sleep means to us.

4

Have pre-sleep routines -

try and do these consistently before naps and bedtime. It can help babies and children transition to sleep more easily and evidence shows that it can help improve childhood sleep.

5

Have plenty of exposure to broad spectrum daylight -

this is important to help develop a robust circadian rhythm or body clock. Getting outside with kids in the morning can help their bodies distinguish between night and day and help them sleep better at night.

6

Lower the lights in your home a few hours before bedtime -

by about 6-8 weeks your child will start to produce the wonderful sleep hormone called Melatonin, which is stimulated with dim light and a great way to get little ones feeling sleepy. Keeping the bedroom dark with minimal to no lighting at night also helps. If you do need to have a light on at night, try using a red-light bulb which blocks blue light waves that can interfere with melatonin production.

7

Filling a tummy before bed does not guarantee better sleep -

while making sure your child has a healthy and nutritious diet is important, there is little research to show a connection between poor eating/feeding and sleep disruptions. Giving your child a larger meal or a bigger feed at night won't necessarily create better sleep. In fact, the digestion of a heavy meal just before bed might hamper sleep. Formula doesn't help a child sleep longer either.

8

Every child has a unique sleep need -

some children need less sleep than others and will likely need to sleep less to be able to sleep well. For an evidence based reference to sleep needs by age check this article* at the National Sleep Foundation.

9

Sleep disruption in your older child is often related to temperament and day-time parenting -

addressing their confidence and security in the day can positively impact their sleep at night.

10

Every family and every child is different -

try and ignore the external chatter from friends and family and focus on you and your baby. Your friend might have had a 5-month-old who slept through the night but that doesn't mean that is the norm. All children will eventually sleep and taking the pressure and stress off of yourselves can actually help get there sooner!