The Sleep Disorders Center
Columbus Children's Hospital

Sleep Tips for Children

The following recommendations will help your child get the best sleep possible and make it easier for him or her to fall asleep and stay asleep:

- **Sleep schedule.** Your child's bedtime and wake-up time should be about the same time everyday. There should not be more than an hour's difference in bedtime and wake-up time between school nights and non-school nights.

- **Bedtime routine.** Your child should have a 20 to 30-minute bedtime routine that is the same every night. The routine should include calm activities, such as reading a book or talking about the day, with the last part occurring in the room where your child sleeps.

- **Bedroom.** Your child's bedroom should be comfortable, quiet, and dark. A nightlight is fine, as a completely dark room can be scary for some children. Your child will sleep better in a room that is cool (less than75° F). Also, avoid using your child's bedroom for time out or other punishment. You want your child to think of the bedroom as a good place, not a bad one.

- **Snack.** Your child should not go to bed hungry. A light snack (such as milk and low-fat cheese) before bed is a good idea. Heavy meals within an hour or two of bedtime, however, may interfere with sleep.

- **Caffeine.** Your child should avoid caffeine for at least 6 to 8 hours before bedtime. Caffeine can be found in many types of soda, coffee, iced tea, and chocolate.

- **Evening activities.** The hour before bed should be a quiet time. Your child should not get involved in high-energy activities, such as rough play or playing outside, or stimulating activities, such as computer games.

- **Television.** Keep the television set out of your child's bedroom. Children can easily develop the bad habit of "needing" the television to fall asleep. It is also much more difficult to control your child's television viewing if the set is in the bedroom.

- **Naps.** Naps should be geared to your child's age and developmental needs. However, very long naps or too many naps should be avoided, as too much daytime sleep can result in your child sleeping less at night.

- **Exercise.** Your child should spend time outside every day and get daily exercise, but if possible, limit exercise within 4 hours of bedtime.

Adapted from: Mindell JA & Owens JA (2003). A Clinical Guide to Pediatric Sleep: Diagnosis and Management of Sleep Problems. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.