



## SLEEP STRATEGIES AND ROUTINES

Most parents report positive changes within two weeks using the following strategies:

- Lots of exercise and fresh air in the afternoon, at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise -- run, walk, climb, bike ride. Exercise reduces stress and promotes the production of calming brain chemistry, and is very helpful for those children who have difficulty falling asleep. Exercise also helps those children who may be waking several times a night.
- Quiet activities after dinner (or at least one hour before bed). No television, computer, Ipad for at least one hour before bedtime. Technology produces excitatory brain waves which will interfere with sleep, even when the child is looking relaxed. NEVER ever take technology to bed or leave it in bed, in case the child wakes at night. Children staying up all night on technology is becoming increasingly common and creating daytime behavior and memory issues due to the sleep deprivation.
- Establish set bedtime (7:30 PM for toddlers; 8:30 PM school aged). Children with modulation difficulties do not get the cues from their body that they need to slow down and sleep, we must help their body do this. Circadian rhythms affect brain function. Sleep is essential.
- Body temperature must drop to be able to fall asleep. Some children need help to lower their body temperature. The routine below is helpful in preparing the body for sleep.
- Once out of a warm bath, the body temperature drops and the body is prepared for the first stage of sleep. Other strategies that some parents find helpful include:
  - Fan in the room (running all night) to keep body temperature lowered
  - “Chillow” insert in pillowcase (1-888-chillow)



Example Bedtime Routine (for best results use every night at the same time)

- 30 minutes before bedtime; warm bath for 20 minutes
- Follow with a deep rubdown massage with towel to arms, legs, back, hands and feet. (Add Epsom salts to bath for added relaxation).
- After bath, put on comfy PJ's and get straight into bed. )The body is now ready for sleep aided by the relaxing bath and the change in body temperature.)
- Read one short story (Or bedtime poems) and turn out the lights. Sleep music may be helpful. ([www.babygotosleep.com](http://www.babygotosleep.com) offers lullabies with a mothers' heartbeat in the background. Has a 95% success rate of helping children fall asleep in under 5 minutes.)

Other helpful strategies:

- Heavy blanket or weighted blanket or pillows wedged around them, especially helpful for children with reduced body awareness, and/or who need physical contact to fall asleep.
- For children afraid of sleeping with the lights out, dim the lights and wait until the child is asleep to turn them off fully. The brain can detect any source of light and this will prevent accessing the restorative sleep states.