

Top Mental Health Tips for Parents and Carers



Swanshurst
School

We all know how important it is to get a good nights sleep in order to feel refreshed and ready to face the day head on. This is super important for our young people with studies suggesting the recommended amount of sleep being 8-10 hours for adolescents.

There is a wealth of research that links exercise to positive mental health and wellbeing, and also sleep quality. With that in mind, please see below our Top 5 Tips for Sleep Hygiene and supporting your child to get a good nights sleep.

Sleep Hygiene and Mental Health

1 Keep a consistent sleep schedule

Try to go to sleep and wake up at about the same times every day – even on weekends. This reinforces your body's sleep cycle (your internal clock), which can make it easier for you to fall asleep and wake up every day. Sticking to a consistent schedule may also help reduce daytime sleepiness.

2 Create a relaxing bedtime routine – and stick with it

A relaxing bedtime routine helps you unwind so you're ready to sleep. Keeping the routine consistent helps your body recognize that it's bedtime when you start the routine. This may help you fall asleep more quickly.

The best time to start your routine is about 30– 60 minutes before you go to bed.

Your routine can include whatever makes you feel most relaxed unless it involves a device that emits blue light. Here are some ideas:

- Take a warm bath or shower. Not only is the water relaxing in the moment, but the drop in your body temperature as you cool down afterward may make you feel sleepy.
- Try some gentle stretches or yoga to help your muscles relax and release tension.
- Spend a few minutes meditating to help calm your body and mind.
- Try listening to some soothing music while you focus on your breathing.
- Spend time reading a book, but try to avoid electronic reading devices that emit blue light.

3 Turn off electronic devices before you go to sleep

Electronic devices like your phone emit blue light, which can reduce melatonin levels in your body. It's similar to how seeing sunlight can make you feel more awake.

Melatonin is a chemical that controls your sleep/wake cycle. When your levels dip, it can be more difficult to fall asleep.

Devices that emit blue light can also keep your brain alert, making it harder to fall asleep.

Keeping your phone near your bed can disrupt your sleep, even if you're not aware of it. Message notifications, buzzing, and light that can suddenly pop on in the middle of the night can interrupt your sleep.

4 Manage stress before going to bed

Thinking about things you're worried about can keep you awake at night. To help prevent your worries from keeping you awake:

- Write down your worries before going to bed to help get them out of your head.
- If your to-do list stresses you out, write that down as well. Prioritize what you need to do tomorrow and the rest of the week, then try to relax.
- Research suggests that a weighted blanket may help with anxiety and insomnia, and it may provide benefits similar to deep pressure therapy.
- Try meditation before bed to help calm your mind.

5 Limit large meals before bed

Eating a large meal before bed may negatively affect your sleep quality. It may also cause symptoms of acid reflux, which can keep you awake.

For more advice, support and guidance on mental health and wellbeing please visit our website www.swanshurst.org/safeguarding-mental-health/1723.html