



Primary School Children

Insomnia– Management

Establish good sleep habits

Good sleep habits are really important for children who have problems falling asleep i.e. insomnia. Good habits should include:

- going to bed at the same time each night and waking up at the same time every day (even on the weekends)
- avoid caffeine (often in chocolate bars as well as Coke, tea and coffee)
- making sure the bedroom is cool, quiet, and fairly dark
- having a bedtime routine that is calm and helps kids wind down
- avoiding over-exciting activities before bed like computer games and TV.

Remove the clock from the bedroom, as your child may be watching it during the night, adding to their worry about not sleeping

Teach relaxation training.

Teaching your child ways to relax can help them fall asleep. Relaxation ideas that you can teach your child include:

- lying down with their eyes closed and then tightening and relaxing all the muscles in their body, one after the other
- some children find it helps to do these muscle exercises while thinking about their favourite (relaxing) place e.g. the beach, a park, in granny's back yard ...

Change your child's thoughts about going to sleep

You can help your child have good thoughts about going to sleep rather than bad ones. For example, instead of saying, "I won't be able to sleep tonight," it is better to think, "Tonight I will just relax and rest at bedtime".



Restrict the time in bed

To get on top of insomnia you can temporarily set your child's bedtime later. For example, if your child usually falls asleep at 11pm set their bedtime to 10.45pm to start with. Being extra sleepy will help your child fall asleep right away and stay asleep. After a couple of nights the bedtime can be moved forward to 10.30pm. Once your child is able to fall asleep quickly you can then bring their bedtime forward to 10.15pm. Continue this until the desired bedtime is reached.

Get out of bed

If your child is still tossing and turning 20 minutes after being taken to bed, let your child leave the bedroom for 20 minutes to do something quiet e.g. reading. This helps your child see their bedroom as a place for sleep. This also helps to stop your child from linking their bedroom with not being able to sleep. After 20 minutes take your child back to bed. You may need to repeat this cycle a number of times.

