

TIP SHEET: IMPROVING SLEEP

SOME SUGGESTIONS TO PROACTIVELY PLAN:

- **Establish a structured evening routine:** A sample routine might include dinner at 6:00 p.m., followed by quiet time or quiet activity, healthy snack, bath, pajamas, brush teeth, bedtime at 8:00 p.m. A visual schedule may be helpful.
- **Regular physical exercise:** Regular physical activity can contribute to better sleep. Exercise should be done before dinnertime.
- **Keep a regular bedtime:** Avoid letting your child sleep or nap at other times.
- **Remove stimulants:** Eliminate caffeinated drinks and chocolate from your child's diet, especially in the afternoon and evening. Try slowly introducing healthier caffeine-free replacement foods over a few days or weeks.
- **Use relaxation techniques:** Consider a warm bath, quiet time, music or relaxation recordings (with or without headphones), or gentle massage.
- **Create a calming bedroom environment:** Make sleep more comfortable by adjusting: light (more or less), amount of noise heard in the room, type of pajamas, feel of the pillow, sheet, and blanket. Ensure they have some security items in bed (e.g., a favourite blanket or stuffed animal).
- **Use bedrooms only for sleeping and dressing:** Use other areas of the house for playing, watching television, or using electronics.
- **Immediately redirect any attempts to sleep elsewhere:** Return them to their own bed. Briefly explain they need to sleep in their own bed. Provide specific rewards in the morning for sleeping in their own bed, sleeping through the night. If the reward is not earned, the child could be reminded, "Tonight, if you stay in your own bed, you can have reward tomorrow morning."
- **Stick to a structured morning routine:** Might include a gentle wake-up followed by brief quiet play with a favourite toy or family pet, followed by dressing, washing, brushing teeth. Again, a visual schedule may be helpful. Use breakfast (choice of food, favourite drink) as an incentive.



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