



Sleep Hygiene for Children and Families

Sleep hygiene is a group of healthy sleep habits or behaviors children and adults can practice that may help improve the ability to fall asleep and remain asleep through the night. Establishing and practicing these habits throughout the day can impact both the quality and quantity of sleep children get each night, which plays an important role in their physical and mental health.

Sleep Hygiene for Children Experiencing Trauma

Any child can face challenges with sleep hygiene. Children experiencing trauma may regularly experience sleep disruptions, including difficulty falling asleep, shorter sleep duration, waking frequently throughout the night, nightmares, and early-morning waking. These issues may be more prevalent among children and youth following traumatic events.

Fostering healthy practices to help children who have experienced trauma prepare for sleep is crucial for both their well-being and their caregiver's. Changing sleep behaviors may take time due to years of established sleep patterns and behaviors.

Assessing Sleep

Caregivers and those supporting them can start building new, healthy sleep habits for their children by asking a few questions about the child's current routine. Caregivers can use this information to identify things they are already doing to support good sleep as well as areas that may need attention to make sleep easier. These questions include:

- What time does your child typically fall asleep and wake up? Does it vary between weekdays and weekends?
- What is your child's bedtime routine? What are they usually doing during the hour before bed?
- Does your child experience intense nightmares, sleep terrors, bedwetting, or sleepwalking? (Please note that these behaviors should be reported to a pediatrician or Behavioral Health therapist.)
- Does your child have comfort objects or people like stuffed animals, pets, or siblings?

Solutions for Improving Sleep Hygiene

After reviewing their child's current sleep habits, families can review the tips below, trying them out over time. It may take many days or weeks of attempting a new routine with a child before they become acclimated to it. Some families have found it helpful to hold a family meeting to talk about their new bedtime routines and fill out a bedtime plan together.

Create a Healthy Environment

- ☐ Set home temperature at 70 degrees or below
- ☐ No screens (including television, tablets, or phones) 30 minutes to 1 hour before bedtime
- ☐ Dim the lights and only use nightlights that are yellow, orange, or red (NOT blue or white)
- ☐ Bathe or shower before bed (if a child hates bath time, do not use this tactic)
- ☐ Brush the child's teeth
- ☐ Put on clothes that are specific to sleeping

Create a Safe Environment

- ☐ Help quiet the home at bedtime (children who have experienced trauma can easily startle):
 - ☐ Use white noise or sound machines with soothing sounds or music (sleep apps can also be helpful)
 - ☐ Use child-sized earplugs
 - ☐ Keep "awake" things out of sight (e.g., homework, phones, tablets, and toys) and provide a basket outside the bedroom to store these things each night
 - ☐ Turn down music and television in other parts of the home
- ☐ Do not use the bed as a place for time-out or punishment so the bed is a positive and safe space
- ☐ Allow the child to sleep in a room with a favorite item, pet, or a sibling, if applicable

Establish Routines Around Activities at Bedtime

- ☐ Establish a bedtime and do not deviate more than one hour beyond it on the weekends
- ☐ Perform activities in the same order from the Healthy Environment list above
- ☐ Read a book or sing together
- ☐ Perform a relaxation strategy of choice:
 - ☐ Tapping
 - ☐ Slow breathing
 - ☐ Prayer
 - ☐ Meditation

Flexible Daytime Routines that Promote Healthy Sleep

Good sleep hygiene is not just about a child's bedtime routine. The list shown below includes tasks that families can complete during the day that may also improve sleep quality.

- ☐ Eat three meals per day at a table with others
- ☐ Change out of pajamas and into daytime clothes
- ☐ Try not to nap during the day after six years of age
- ☐ Do 30+ minutes of physical activity
- ☐ Allow for plenty of light exposure inside (with window shades open and/or lights on)
- ☐ Help children have time outside at least once per day
- ☐ Avoid caffeine and strategically time any stimulating medications

Follow the tips listed below for trying out a new bedtime routine:

- Families may benefit from the use of a visual bedtime routine card so that their child knows what's coming next.





[illegible]

Example Goals for Your Shared Action Plan

1. Family will turn off screens 30 minutes before bedtime
 - Family will have a family meeting to discuss the benefits of turning off electronics prior to sleep
 - Family will set a date to begin the routine of turning off electronics
 - Family will have a basket where electronics will be placed outside of bedrooms
2. Family will have a bedtime that is at the same time every night (it may vary by no more than one hour on weekends)
 - Family will have a family meeting to discuss the benefits of having a regular bedtime that varies by no more than one hour on weekends
 - Family will decide what time bedtime will be
 - Family will set a date and be consistent with that bedtime
3. Family will have a routine of activities prior to bedtime that promotes healthy sleep
 - Create a routine of reading a book to the child before bed (or, if older, letting the child read to the caregiver)
 - Create a routine of bath time and brushing teeth
 - Create a routine of singing a calming song
4. Family will create a calm place for sleep
 - Care manager will facilitate the acquisition of a sensory bed, if applicable
 - Caregiver will speak in low tones, avoiding conflict at bedtime
 - Home temperature will be set at 70 degrees or below
 - Lights will be dim with only a nightlight in the room
 - Caregiver will turn on white noise
5. Family will use mindfulness or other stress-reduction tools if worry is keeping their child up at night
 - Caregiver will pray with the child at bedtime, if religious or spiritual
 - Caregiver will participate in tapping exercises with the child at bedtime
 - Caregiver will assist the child with breathing exercises at bedtime
 - NOTE: An older child may choose to do these activities alone at bedtime

Goal	Who	Is Doing What	Progress
Improved sleep in the Doe household indicated by decreased tantrums at bedtime and less sleep interruption during the night.	Tami Hilton, Family Navigator Charlie Doe, guardian	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tami will request an assessment with current PT for a sensory bed.• Tami will email a blank bedtime plan to Charlie.• Charlie will have a family meeting 4/14 to develop a routine plan at bedtime.<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Family will keep all electronics in a basket in the kitchen 7pm– Charlie will read a story– Janie will play Sesame Street sleep app while falling asleep• Charlie will implement the routine 4/16 and will record successes and challenges.• Charlie and Tami will review results 4/26 and brainstorm any changes.	

Sleep Hygiene Resources

Resource Type	Description and Links
Specialty bed for children with sensory needs	<p>There are many different kinds of specialty beds, sleep spaces, and cubies with a variety of features such as tops, railing, sound, and lights.</p> <p>The Occupational Therapist (OT) and/or Physical Therapist (PT) evaluation will determine the bed most appropriate for the child's needs. Medicaid will pay for this resource.</p> <p>Acquisition Process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Request specialty bed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Alamance County, email Emily.ketner@numotion.com or call 336-315-8762 • For all other counties, email Howard.yip@numotion.com or Angelica.centeno@numotion.com or call 919-303-0902 • Make sure to include patient information, contact information, and a doctor's prescription for a "specialty bed." 2. NuMotion will contact the caregiver to schedule an evaluation, unless the child is currently in therapy, in which case they may provide a Medical Necessity form. 3. NuMotion will contact the placement provider to discuss the recommended bed type covered by insurance.
Weighted blanket	For children age 4 years and older, the ideal weight for weighted blanket is equal to 10% of their body weight.
Weighted stuffy	Warmies
Free sleep apps	<p>Moshi: Sleep and Mindfulness (all ages): Over 85 hours of original audio stories, sleep sounds, meditations, white noise, and relaxing music</p> <p>Sleepiest App (Age 13+): Over 250 sleep sounds, stories, and meditations</p> <p>Relax Melodies (Age 4+): White noise, calm, and meditation</p> <p>Stop, Breathe & Think Kids (Age 5-10): 15 short video meditation "missions", each of which lasts between two and eight minutes</p> <p>Surfing on a Cloud (Under Age 10): Stories that bring calm and peace</p> <p>Lullaby Songs for Sleep (Infants and young children): 24 classic lullaby songs</p>
Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) Tapping: A Relaxation Technique	Tapping Confident Kids Demonstration Video
Sesame Street in Communities	Big Bird's Bedtime The Sleep Song Article specific to children in foster care



If you have any questions about this information or would like to discuss a case, please contact Tami Hilton, Integration Consultant.

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