

No 4: Sleep

A good sleep is just as important as good exercise. It helps the brain and body grow and develop so that children have positive physical and emotional wellbeing. There are a number of ways parents can help:

- **Have a routine.** Try to get your child to bed at the same time every night. Have a calm time before going to bed to help mind and body wind down – they may want to read or listen to music or just play quietly.
- **Switch off.** The NHS recommends at least 90 minutes free from digital devices like smartphones, tablets, TVs, etc, before bedtime to allow the brain to power down.
- **Dim lights.** Make sure lights are dimmed. When light dims in the evening, we produce a chemical called melatonin, which gives the body clock its cue, telling us it's time to sleep.
- **Rest.** It is ok for a child to rest in bed rather than go straight to sleep if they are not tired or are finding it hard to get off to sleep.
- **Talk about worries sooner.** If your child has frequent worries at bedtime it might help to ask them to talk about worries earlier in the evening. These worries may be expressed as tummy aches, headaches or hunger, especially in younger children.
- **Be mindful.** Mindfulness techniques can help your child relax before bed.

It is normal for children to have bad dreams sometimes but if it is several times per week speak to your school nurse or GP.

You could try some of these tips to improve your own sleep.

