

## INSOMNIA

### Sweet Dreams

Thinking about sleep should not keep you up at night

A good night's sleep should be the goal for all children as they go to bed in the evening.

Adopting five fundamental healthy habits will lead to successful and healthy sleep for most children. For some individuals, however, sleep issues will persist no matter how much attention is placed on healthy habits. In these cases, pharmacologic intervention might be necessary.

### Rule of five

Sleep is discussed in early pediatric health maintenance visit and is an endless topic of conversation for parents. Yet sleep gets relatively little attention in medical school and pediatric residency training.

When thinking about sleep and how to address sleep problems, it is best to start with a holistic survey of the patient. Five fundamental healthy habits lead to successful and healthy sleep: food, fitness, friendship with self, friendship with others and fields (sleep environment).

1. Food: Children should avoid heavy meals late in the day and consumption of caffeine within eight hours of bedtime. Consider adding a bedtime snack. Food should include protein, which contains the amino acid tryptophan, the precursor to making serotonin and melatonin. In addition, inadequate vitamin and mineral intake limits the supply of necessary co-factors to make melatonin, so make sure there is enough magnesium, iron and B vitamins in the diet.

2. Fitness: Encourage 30-60 minutes of vigorous exercise a day, but discourage exercising within two hours of sleep.

3-4. Friendship with self and others: Stress and other negative emotions such as being sad or mad make it hard to sleep. Biofeedback, meditation, supportive relationships, practicing compassion and volunteering help mitigate stress and promote mental well-being.

5. Fields: The sleep area should be dark, cool and comfortable. The room should be orderly with quiet natural sound (e.g., waterfall, crickets, rain on the roof, gentle wind chimes, etc.) Soft, relaxing music (not dance) also can be helpful. There should be no TV in the bedroom. Aromatherapy with lavender or chamomile can be calming and soothing.

In addition, bedtime should be at the same time each night. There should be a warm bath or massage before going to bed.