

## Mrs Dowdell's Parenting Pointers

### Sleep Hygiene

A few years ago, I came across the concept that practicing good "Sleep Hygiene" can improve the physical and mental wellbeing of both adults and children. So, what is good sleep hygiene and how can we make positive changes to move towards everyone getting a better night's sleep?



Sleep hygiene is having a variety of things in place that enable us to sleep well. This can be considering our bedroom environment; keeping lights down, ensuring a comfortable room temperature, creating a relaxing space to unwind with minimal distractions. It's also

about valuing sleep and making it a priority, so thinking about having consistent bedtimes and waking times and then sticking to them. Science has shown us that having enough sleep is a critical part of staying healthy, just like eating the right foods or getting enough exercise.

One of the important elements of having good sleep hygiene is to have a predictable bedtime routine. We know that babies and toddlers thrive on the bath time, story time, bedtime pattern that helps to soothe them into sleep and older children and adults can still learn from these principles. We need to make sure we eat our main meal early enough to allow proper digestion before bed. A warm bath or shower can help with winding down and "washing away" the stresses of the day. What about reading a book or listening to relaxing music? Scented oils or mindfulness techniques can be helpful too.

It's a scientific fact is that bright light hinders the production of melatonin, which our bodies need to produce in order for us to drift off to sleep. This means we should try to keep bedrooms quite dark and that we need to consider reducing screen time immediately



Good nights sleep

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No phones 1 hour before bed time

before bed. We know that the blue light emitted by computer games, mobile phones and TV's makes it harder to get to sleep. On top of that, the adrenaline produced when playing exciting computer games makes it very hard for the brain to switch off. After exposure to electronic devices, we all need time to wind down before we'll be able to sleep well.

Do we value sleep and what model are we setting for our children in terms of their sleep hygiene? Why not have a good spring clean of the whole family's bedtime routines? What new and healthy habits can we include into the evening? What unhealthy habits need to stop or be shifted to earlier in the day? If you need help with figuring out some new plans for bed-time you can contact me at [parenting@foundrylanprimary.co.uk](mailto:parenting@foundrylanprimary.co.uk)