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ADD Sleep Remedies for Kids: 18 Parent-Tested Solutions

Better sleep leads to better control of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD) symptoms in children.

by *Jeanne Gehret*

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You whisper, "Sleep well, honey," as you shut off the light. You close the bedroom door, and head off to your easy chair. And your child sleeps soundly through the night, waking up refreshed the next morning. For many of us with children who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD), this scenario is a dream that hasn't come true—yet.

A good night's sleep is vital to your child's mood and brain function. Studies show that not getting enough rest can worsen ADD/ADHD symptoms, leading to loss of emotional control. It can also adversely affect working memory, a problem many of our children suffer from.

What to do? Try some of these ADD sleep remedies, all of which I have used successfully with my own children, one of whom has ADHD. These strategies got me—and them—through the night.

Next: How to Eat, Drink, and Exercise Right for a Good Night's Sleep

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To read this issue of *ADDitude* in full, buy the back issue.

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Eat, Drink, and Exercise Right for a Good Night's Sleep

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Avoid eating or snacking two or three hours before bedtime. Digestion, especially of foods containing caffeine or sugar, can keep your child up. If he insists on snacking, give him warm milk, saltines, or a little turkey, which has the natural sleep-inducing chemical tryptophan.

Your child should drink enough water during the day to prevent his asking for a glass of water at bedtime -- and his subsequent bathroom break later.

Have your child exercise -- jog, jump rope, ride a bike, walk -- in the morning or during the day. Physical activity helps our bodies make the transition between the phases of sleep. Also, since exercise places physical stress on the body, the brain increases the time a child spends in deep sleep.

Next: How to Reduce Nighttime Distractions

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For a child who is sensitive to light, even a sliver of illumination from a clock radio can bring wakefulness. Try the

following:

Choose a clock with a face that lights up only when a button is pressed -- even small lights can be disruptive.

Turn a child's bed away from the bedroom door, so he isn't disturbed by light seeping through it.

Reduce light from windows by putting up blackout curtains.

If these approaches don't work, **try a sleep mask**.

Use earplugs or relaxing music to muffle harsh noise, whether it be TV chatter, a ringing phone, or a barking dog.

Next: How to Create and Stick to Healthy Bedtime Rituals

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Evening rituals signal the brain and body to slow down. They also provide a comfortable closeness with caregivers that allows fearful children to sink into the arms of sleep. Point out that she will have to finish homework an hour or more before bedtime to have "slowdown time" with you.

Tell or read a bedtime story to a younger child. Allow older children to read in bed.

Be sure your child has her favorite blanket or stuffed animal. Older kids may prefer to cuddle with a squishy, soft pillow.

Next: How to Dress for Sleep Comfort

Dress for Sleep Comfort

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Clothe cold feet. Chilly feet keep some children awake; wearing socks may send them into dreamland.

Remove any scratchy tags from pajamas.

Don't combine flannel pajamas and flannel sheets. The fabrics may stick together and make it difficult to turn over in bed.

Keep kids cool. If the room is warm, moisture-wicking athletic clothing or all-cotton sleepwear can prevent sweating -- and tossing. Air conditioning or a small fan will cool down the room -- and the whirring sound of the fan blades will calm a child's mind.

Next: How to Practice Pre-Bedtime Relaxation Routines

Pre-Bedtime Relaxation Routines

Pre-Bedtime Relaxation Routines

A foot rub relaxes a restless child. Have your child lie on her back -- if the room is chilly, cover her -- and gently hold her foot with one hand. Make a fist with your other hand and lightly move it up and down her instep.

Have your child focus on her breathing while visualizing an elevator gently ascending and descending with every inhalation and exhalation.

Create affirming phrases that she repeats to herself as she awaits sleep, such as "I am lovable and capable."

Consider prayer. Encourage her to entrust her loved ones and her cares to God to quiet a restless mind.

More Sleep Advice for ADD/ADHD Children

ADD/ADHD Sleep Problems: Causes and Tips to Rest Better Tonight!

The Best Alarm Clocks for Kids

Get Kids to Bed on Time!

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