# SLEEP

Sleep has beneficial effects on our health, emotions, memory and academic potential. Sleep is important in children to restore physical and mental health, and keep memories and immune systems on track. Not getting enough sleep can negatively affect a child's well-being, ability to make decisions and attention spans – all of which are necessary for success in school.

Many recent studies have linked sleep and mental health in both children and adults. Living with a mental health problem can affect how well you sleep but in addition, poor sleep can have a negative impact on our mental health.

Primary school is a critical period for establishing healthy sleep habits in children. **A primary school aged child requires between 10-11 hours of sleep each night.**

*'Over tired'*                                                                    Fear of being left alone

**Why can't my child sleep?**

*Bad habits, for example too much*

*'screen time' before bedtime.*                          Bedtime fears, for example being

afraid of the dark.

**How can parents help?**

- ✓ Set up regular times for going to bed and getting up in the morning.
- ✓ Stick to these times!
- ✓ Develop a consistent and relaxing bedtime routine for your child. For example, start with a bath followed by a bedtime story. This gives a child space and time to be quiet and settle before bedtime.
- ✓ Stop using electronics! Light plays an important role when we sleep. When it is dark, the brain secretes a hormone called melatonin, which causes us to feel sleepy. However, when it is light our brain secretes less, which makes us more awake and alert. Using a phone, tablet or watching TV will reduce the amount of melatonin being secreted that will keep children up for longer.
- ✓ Be aware of what your child eats or drinks before bedtime.
- ✓ Use a journal so a child can write down their worries before they go to sleep.
- ✓ Create a peaceful sleeping environment.

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