

SLEEP DIFFICULTIES

Definition:

Not wanting to go to sleep with prolonged fighting about bedtime; not being able to fall asleep; waking up in the night and unable to go back to sleep; often needing parental help to fall asleep consistently; a sleeping pattern of mixed up days and nights.

Behavior:

Why could this be happening?

- Nighttime waking may occur because a child is too warm/cold, thirsty or having a bad dream.
- A child may have difficulty falling asleep at night if he/she is not tired (consider decreasing or eliminating nap time).
- A child may be overly tired or there may be too much activity before bed (wrestling, loud TV, etc.), making it difficult for the child to fall asleep.
- Routines are not established.
- Child may be ill or teething.
- Child has recently experienced a change such as a new home, new sibling, death or divorce in the family.
- A child may have a medical condition such as sleep apnea.

Typical Development:

- Children between 3 - 5 need 10 - 14 hours of sleep per day.
- Nightmares and night terrors are normal.
- Children adapt best when a routine is followed each night.
- Children gradually give up naps during preschool years; a few children give up naps in their toddler years.
- Staying dry through the night is not expected until about age 6.

When to be Concerned:

- If a child snores or has interrupted breathing during sleep. This may indicate sleep apnea.
- If a child doesn't get 10 - 14 hours of sleep per day due to difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep.
- If a child experiences bedwetting after age 7.

Possible Resources:

Help Me Grow, Early Childhood Family Education, public health nursing, pediatrician, mental health professional