

# Oughton Health

Oughton Primary School Health & Well-Being Newsletter

Edition 2, February 2019

Welcome to the second edition of our newsletter, Oughton Health, our very own newsletter with a focus on promoting good health, both physical and mental to ensure good well-being. In this edition, we focus on an aspect of our lives which, in theory, we spend about a third of our life doing (sleeping) and explore the importance of sleep on our physical and mental health.

So, why should we give serious consideration to sleep? We all live busy lives and by the end of the day our body needs a break - sleep allows our body to rest for the next hectic day. Sleep is essential. It is as important to our bodies as eating, drinking and breathing. Surely we all know how important it is?

Sleep is more important than we may think. We all know what it feels like when we don't get enough sleep - we are tired, moody, unable to think clearly and certainly not at our best! We might have a hard time following directions, or find ourselves snapping at even the smallest thing. Normally achievable tasks feel impossible and we feel heavy and clumsy. This impacts on how well we achieve our daily tasks and, for children, it has a significant impact on their ability to learn. So, if you or your children are struggling to find time to get the right amount of sleep, hopefully the tips below will help.

## **Sleep tips:**

For most children/adults, sleeping comes pretty naturally but, in case you/ your child are finding it hard, here are some tips to help:

- Try to go to bed at the same time every night; this helps your body get into a routine.
- Follow a bedtime routine that is calming, such as taking a warm bath or reading/sharing a book.
- Avoid foods and drinks that contain caffeine/sugar including fizzy drinks for at least an hour before bedtime.
- Turn off the TV &/or all electronic devices including phones at least an hour before bedtime. Don't have a TV or mobile phone in your room. Research shows that those who have these in their rooms sleep less.
- Don't watch scary TV shows or films close to bedtime because these can sometimes make it hard to fall asleep.
- Don't exercise just before going to bed, keep this for earlier in the day - it will help you sleep better.
- Use your bed just for sleeping - not doing homework, reading, playing games, watching TV, or talking on the phone. That way, you'll train your body to associate your bed with sleep.

*If you have a hard time falling asleep for more than one or two nights or have worries that are keeping you from sleeping, talk to someone. Just talking about it could help you relax just enough (yawn) that you'll be ready to sleep.*



## **IN THIS ISSUE:**

- The importance of sleep for our well-being

### **Watch out for our next issue:**

- The importance of exercise for our well-being

## **Recommended amount of sleep (this varies per age):**

- **Infants under 1 year: 12-16 hours**
- **Children 1-2 years old: 11-14 hours**
- **Children 3-5\* years old: 10-13 hours**
- **Children 6-12\* years old: 9-12 hours**
- **Teenagers 13-18\* years old: 8-10 hours**
- **Adults: 6-9 hours**

**\*Studies show that lost sleep for children on weeknights combined with unhealthy bedtime habits at weekends are triggering difficulties for them during the school week. Reduced sleep can disrupt the ability of children to concentrate for long periods of time and remember what they have learned in class. According to research, children with reduced sleep are more likely to struggle with verbal creativity, problem solving, inhibiting their behaviour, and they generally score lower on IQ tests**

**So, when your child is still trying to convince you that it is okay to be watching TV/ gaming/ Instagramming etc until late, remind them of the impact it can have on their future and tell them to hit the off button and get their head down!**

Sleep is that golden chain that ties health and our bodies together.  
Thomas Dekker

Sleep and health are strongly related - poor sleep can increase the risk of having poor mental health, and poor mental health can make it harder to sleep. Sleep disturbances can be one of the first signs of distress. Common mental health problems like anxiety and depression can often underpin sleep problems. Sleep is vital for maintaining good mental and physical health, it helps us to recover from mental as well as physical exertion; it is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle. Studies have shown that children who regularly get an adequate amount of sleep have improved attention, behaviour, learning, memory, and overall mental and physical health - this goes for adults too! Not getting enough sleep can lead to high blood pressure, obesity and even depression, this is an increasingly problem for children today. Too little sleep can affect growth and immune system.



We can all benefit from improving the quality of our sleep. For many of us, it may simply be a case of making small lifestyle or attitude adjustments in order to help us sleep better. Up to one third of the population may suffer from insomnia (lack of sleep or poor quality sleep) or other sleep problems. Often basic techniques can help to improve your sleep (see over for some suggestions). If you/your child are struggling to sleep and have tried a number of techniques which haven't worked for you, you may want to consider seeking additional guidance as it's possible there may be an underlying issue, which you should discuss with your GP. Treating sleep problems alongside mental health or physical problems can help address both symptoms and causes, leading to a quicker recovery.

## THE STAGES OF SLEEP

Whether you/ your child fall asleep as soon as your head hits the pillow or you take time drifting off, your brain is swinging into action, telling your body how to sleep. As you fall asleep, you begin to enter the five different stages of sleep (see below):



### Stage 1

In this stage of light sleep, your body starts to feel a bit drowsy. You can still be woken up easily during this stage. For example, if a light goes on or you hear a noise, you'll probably wake up right away.

### Stage 2

After a little while, you enter stage 2, which is a slightly deeper sleep. Your brain gives the signal to your muscles to relax. It also tells your heart to beat a little slower and your breathing to slow down. Your body temperature drops a bit.

### Stage 3

When you're in this stage, you're in an even deeper sleep, also called slow-wave sleep. Your brain sends a message to your blood pressure to lower. Your body isn't sensitive to the temperature of the air around you, which means that you won't notice if it's a little hot or cold in your room. It's much harder to be awakened when you're in this stage, but some people may sleepwalk or talk in their sleep at this point.

### Stage 4

This is the deepest sleep yet and is also considered slow-wave sleep. It's very hard to wake up from this stage of sleep, and if you do wake up, you're sure to be 'out of it' and confused for at least a few minutes. Like they do in stage 3, some people may sleepwalk or talk in their sleep when going from stage 4 to a lighter stage of sleep.

### Stage 5 R.E.M.

R.E.M. stands for rapid eye movement. Even though the muscles in the rest of your body are totally relaxed, your eyes move back and forth very quickly beneath your eyelids. The R.E.M. stage is when your heart beats faster and your breathing is less regular. This is also the stage when people dream\*! While you're asleep, you repeat stages 2, 3, 4, and R.E.M. about every 90 minutes until you wake up in the morning. For most children, that's about four or five times a night. Who said sleep was boring?

*\*No one knows for sure why people dream. Many scientists think that dreams are linked to how our brains organise memories and emotions. Some think that dreams are the brain's way of making sense of what happened during the day. Others think that dreams allow the brain to sort through the events of the day, storing the important and getting rid of the rubbish. The rest say that dreams are a clue to what you're worried about or thinking about.*

