OUTCOMES THERAPY

LET'S SLEEP ON IT!

AUGUST 18TH, 2020

OuTcomes Therapy Back to School Guide for Families

OT Tip #1

Establish a (Mostly) Regular Bedtime

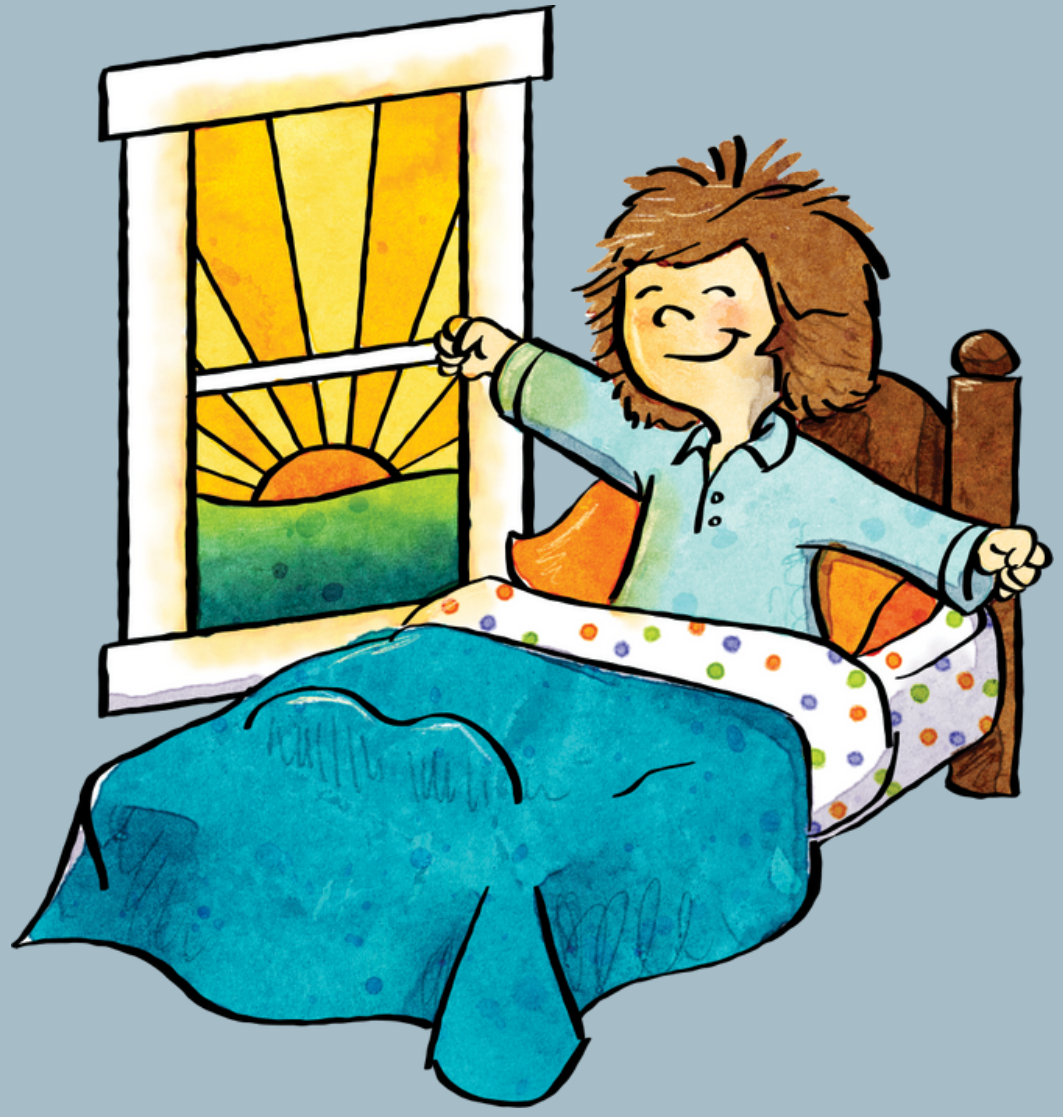
Strive to keep a 30-minute bedtime window. If a child's bedtime is erratic, it can have big repercussions when it comes to behaviour, learning and overall sleep quality.

It is actually interesting to note that children who go to bed earlier often sleep longer and get better quality sleep.

OT Tip #2

Establish a (Mostly) Regular Wake Time

Strive to keep a 30-minute wake time window. This sets the schedule for the entire day. If your child is not awake within the designated window, it is a good idea to wake them. We recognize that it is hard to wake a child, but try to tell yourself "it is short-term pain for long-term gain."

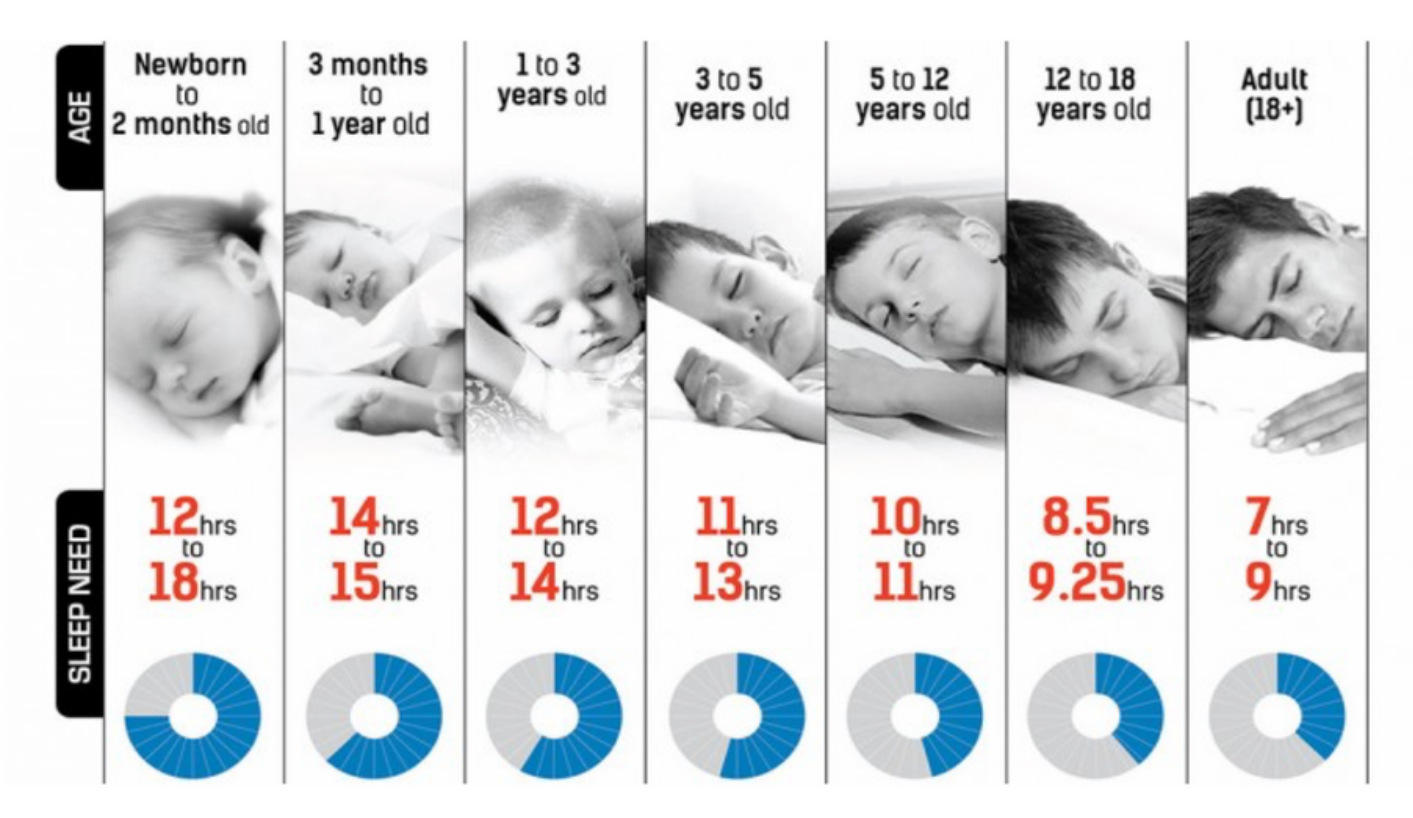


OT Tip #3

Ask whether you & your child are getting enough sleep?

“Sleep is the power source that keeps your mind alert and calm,” says Dr. Marc Weissbluth, sleep expert and author, in his book "Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child."

“Every night and at every nap, sleep recharges the brain’s battery. Sleeping well increases brainpower, just as weight lifting builds stronger muscles...”



OT Tip #4

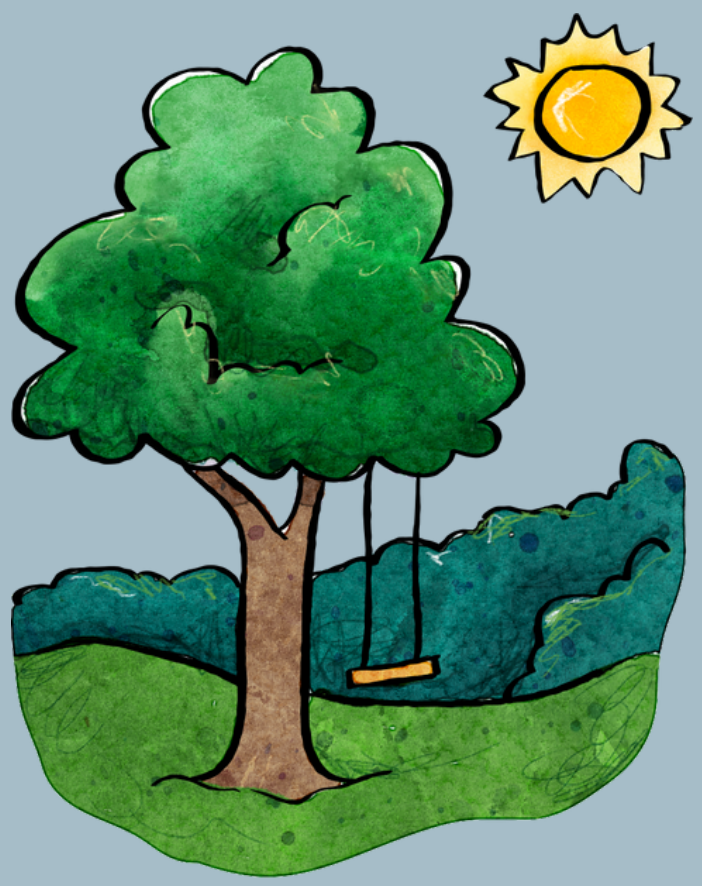
Ensure your child's bedroom is conducive to sleep

While this may be challenging at times, strive to have your child use their bedroom for sleep only. We want your child to associate the bedroom with the sleep room. To do this, as much as possible, minimize toys and clutter in the bedroom, avoid time-outs in the bedroom, reduce noise and lights, aim for the room to be screen-free, and keep the temperature cool (18.3 - 21.1 Celsius).

OT Tip #5

Ensure your child is getting copious physical activity throughout the day.

The quality of sleep is often a reflection of how you spend your day. For many this was very apparent when we were spending the majority of our days at home at the beginning of the pandemic. It was challenging to get our usual physical activity and as a result, our sleep suffered.



OT Tip #6

Focus on Routine & Ease Transitions

Create a bedtime routine and stick to it. This routine is helping your brain get ready to fall asleep and is one of the initial ways children learn to settle themselves.

To foster independence, consider using a visual schedule to have children self-cue the steps in their bedtime routine.

OT Tip #7

Tune into Texture

Feel the inside of your child's pyjamas to ensure that seams, tags, or elastic bands are not unnecessarily keeping your child awake a night. Many children benefit from tight fitting pyjamas such as lycra to avoid discomfort, excess heat, and pyjamas twisting in the night.

OT Tip #8

Pay Attention to Bedding

Being attentive to texture also applies to your bedding. Many children, like adults, have preferences for silk, fleece, flannel, and even lycra sheets. Lycra sheets have the added benefit of providing calming proprioceptive input which aids in falling asleep and sustaining sleep.

OT Tip #9

Add a little weight

Weighted blankets have seen an explosion of popularily in the last couple of months. If your child seems to sleep better with more or heavier blankets, consider speaking with an occupational therapist (OT) about accessing a weighted blanket specific to their needs.

OT Tip #10

Limit Screen Time

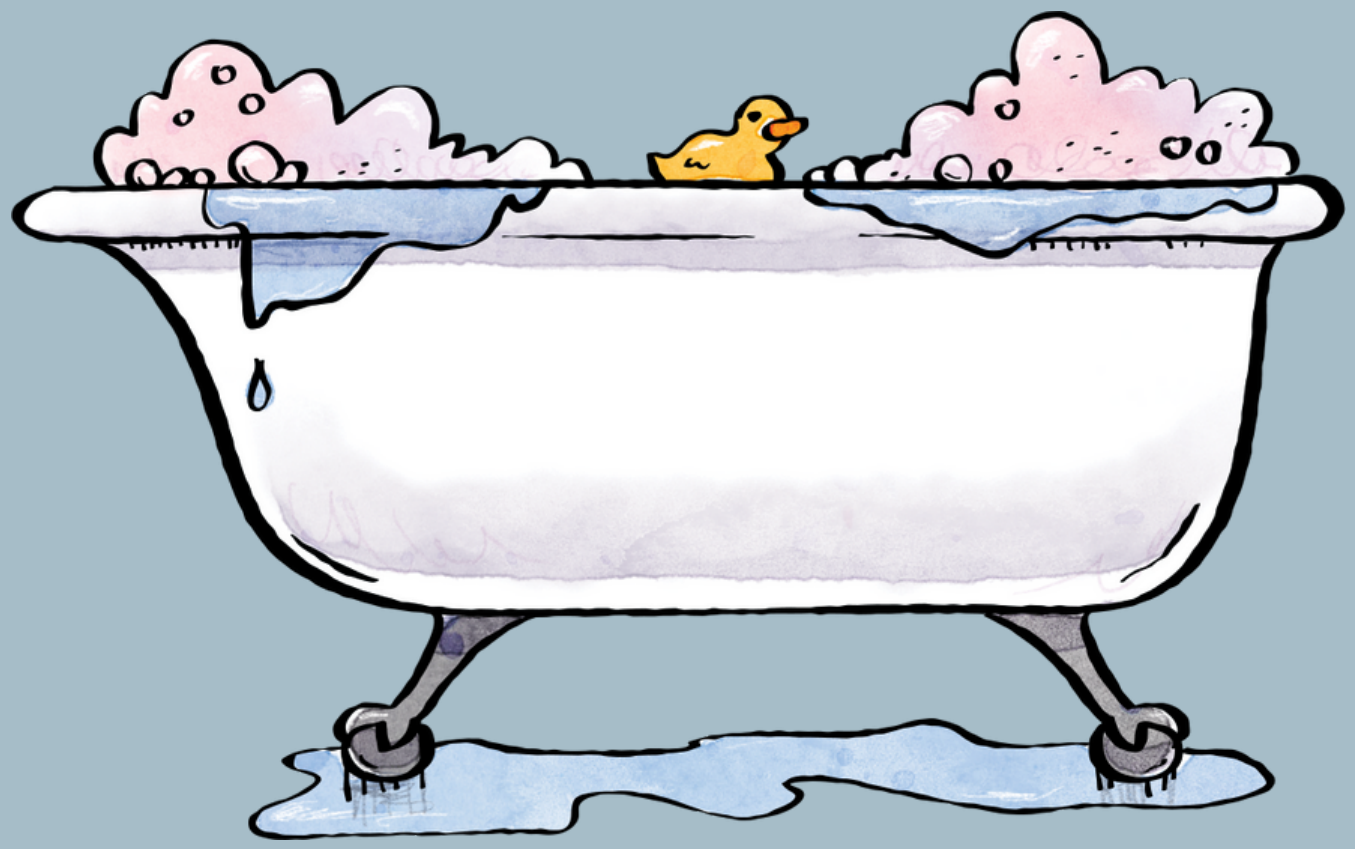
As much as possible, strive to limit screen time to 1-2 hours per day and AVOID all screens 2-3 hours before bed. Using TVs, tablets, smartphones, laptops, or other electronic devices before bed delays your body's internal clock (a.k.a., your circadian rhythm), suppresses the release of the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin, and makes it more difficult to fall asleep.

OT Tip #11

Enjoy a Warm Bath Prior to Bed

A little bit of science for you....getting out of a warm bath drops your body temperature and prepares the body for sleep.

In addition, the focused 1:1 time in the bath can ease the minds of children who may worry more.



OT Tip #12

Falling Asleep is a Skill

It is a skill to be able to calm our mind and body to fall asleep. Some children (& adults) find this easy fall asleep independently. Other children (& adults) find this difficult and need specific instruction in how to slow their body and mind down to fall asleep. They need help in knowing what specifically to do with their bodies, their eyes, their breathing, and their minds. Given the importance of sleep, if needed, reach out & access help.