ARTHRITIS
INFORMATION SHEET

Good sleep habits

What are sleep habits?

Good sleep habits (also called good sleep hygiene) are things that you can do to give your child the best chance of a good refreshing sleep. Most of these things are common sense but can be forgotten in every day busy life.

Why is sleep important?

Sleep is essential for good health. It refreshes the mind and repairs the body. Lack of sleep can cause fatigue and mood changes as well as problems with concentration, memory and coordination.

How much sleep do children need?

There is no magic number for how much sleep a person needs. There are a lot of differences in how much sleep children and adolescents need to be at their best. Below is a guide of sleep needs for different age groups:

Babies under 1:	14-18 hours per 24 hours
Toddlers:	12-14 hours per 24 hours
Primary school:	10-12 hours per 24 hours
High school:	8-10 hours per 24 hours
Adults:	7-9 hours per 24 hours

Tips for better sleep

1. **Get regular** – It is important to keep consistent bedtimes and wake times every day of the week.
2. **Bed is for sleeping** – Keep the bedroom cool and quiet. Try not to let your child use their bed for anything else other than sleep so that their body comes to associate bed with sleep. If they use it as a place to watch TV, do homework, text friends, etc their body will not 'learn' this connection.
3. **Sleep ritual** – Help your child to develop their own routine to remind their body that it's time to sleep. For example, consider relaxation or breathing exercises, warm bath or shower. Allow at least half an hour of quiet time before going to bed.
4. **No naps** – Avoid letting your child taking naps during the day to make sure they are tired at bedtime. If your child needs a nap, make it less than an hour and before 3pm.
5. **Over stimulation** – Avoid high stimulation activities before bed such as watching television, texting, and computer games.
6. **Exercise** – Regular exercise is important to help with good sleep, but try to avoid heavy exercise close to bedtime (for one hour before sleep).
7. **Avoid caffeine** – It is best to completely avoid caffeine containing drinks and food (e.g. energy drinks, caffeinated soft drinks, chocolate, coffee) but especially four to six hours before bed.
8. **Eat well** – A healthy balanced diet will help your child sleep, but timing is important. An empty stomach is distracting, but a big meal just before bed can interrupt sleep too.

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9. **Relaxation** – Learning tips to reduce night time worries and fretting about sleep may be useful. Your child can try breathing exercises, counting or focusing on calm happy scenes.
10. **Use a sleep diary** – This can be a useful way to check your child's sleeping patterns from time to time.

(Modified from Sleep Hygiene fact sheet at www.cci.health.wa.gov.au and the Seattle Children's Sleep Hygiene for Children fact sheet)

If you have tried these tips and your child is still having difficulties with sleep, talk to your rheumatology team. Sometimes medications may be needed in addition to the above tips.

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL ARTHRITIS OFFICE FOR MORE INFORMATION SHEETS ON ARTHRITIS.

This sheet was produced in association with the Australian Paediatric Rheumatology Group

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