



TIPS AND TRICKS FOR UNDERSTANDING CHILDHOOD SLEEP DISTURBANCES

Common Sleep Disturbances In Childhood:

- Frequent awakening during the night.
- Difficulty falling asleep.
- Waking up crying.
- Feeling sleepy during the day.
- Bedwetting.
- Teeth grinding or clenching.
- Waking up early.
- Nightmares, which often are related to the child's well being.
- Sleep or night terrors, sleepwalking, and sleep talking.
- Sleep terrors differ from nightmares as the child exhibiting a sleep terror will scream uncontrollably and appear to be awake but is confused and cannot communicate. Sleep terrors usually occur between 4 and 12 years of age.

Tips And Tricks For Parents And Children:

- Sleep diaries can be helpful in identifying sleep problems.
- Avoid stimulating activities before bedtime.
- Gentle music can be helpful.
- Establish a regular bed time each night and do not vary from it. Similarly, the waking time should not significantly differ from weekday to weekend.
- Create a relaxing bedtime routine, such as giving your child a warm bath or reading a story.
- Make sure the temperature in the bedroom is comfortable and that the bedroom is dark.
- Make sure the noise level in the house is low.
- Avoid giving children large meals close to bedtime.
- Parents should avoid getting into bed with their child in order to get them to sleep.
- If sleepwalking occurs often, remove all objects that may get in their path and use protective barriers if necessary. In other words, take the necessary precautions to ensure that your child is safe.
- Childhood sleep problems may be related to anxiety about going to bed or other emotional problems.
- Parents often find that feeding and rocking their infant helps them to fall asleep; however, this should be discouraged following infancy because children need to learn how to self-soothe and be able to fall asleep independently.
- If sleep problems are evident in your child, it is recommended that you discuss these with your child's pediatrician. A referral to a sleep clinic may be required.

Resources:

- Sleep for Kids – www.sleepforkids.org