

Early Years Inclusion Team

Sleep Solutions for Children with Sensory Needs

Any parent who has a child with Sensory Processing Disorder knows that sleep can be a challenging endeavour.

If your child is not capable of expressing what their sleep issues are, play detective.....

Try lying in their bed in the dark and using your senses to troubleshoot what issues there may be.

- Is there any type of noise that may be bothering them?
- Are the sheets scratchy?
- Are the walls painted a bright colour or is there too much clutter in the room?
- How is the temperature in the room?
- Is there a smell?

Auditory

If a child is affected because of auditory sensitivity, which makes it difficult for him/ her to fall asleep if there is any noise (such as his parents watching TV) in the house. The simplest solution might be for them to use a pair of noise cancelling headphones.



If your child isn't quite as sensitive but does need to have white noise to sleep, you could try a sound machine. It is soothing as well as providing white noise and makes sleeping much easier.

Proprioception (Deep Pressure)

If your child has a hard time settling their body down at bedtime. You might find sleeping with a weighted blanket helps.

You can also try stretchy sheets which will provide a similar effect to a weighted blanket. Deep pressure hugs or massages before bedtime can also help with proprioception input.

Visual

Some children need it to be completely dark in order to fall asleep while others need to have a nightlight. It's might be a good idea to use a dimmable night light because that way, they can adjust to the amount of light they are comfortable with.

Important Tips:

Be sure to offer a variety of sensory activities throughout the day. Meeting your child's sensory needs during the day will positively impact your child's ability to fall asleep at night.

Track patterns and see if you are able to pinpoint things that may be impacting your child's sleep.

Seeing their sleep patterns on a calendar can help you find where their insomnia may be tied to. Seeing their sleep tracked in relation to food or behaviour or sensory triggers can also help you see the patterns that are emerging.

Limit screen time during the day and cut it off completely in the hour or two before bedtime. This will improve their body's ability to fall asleep.



Have a consistent bedtime routine and bedtime. This structure and predictability around bedtime is especially important for kids with sensory processing disorder.

Nutrition is an important piece of the sleep puzzle. Ensure that your child has a well-balanced diet, limited sugar and no caffeine.

A relaxation breathing song is an effective way to help children learn breathing techniques that will help them feel calm. If you play it or sing it and lower the volume slowly, your child may even fall asleep during the

One last note:

If you have tried everything else and your child is still not able to fall asleep and this problem persists for months, talk to your child's doctor about other options.