

## **Hassle free bedtimes**

Last week I talked about the importance of sleep and the amount of sleep that children need to remain healthy. This week I am going to give some ideas on how to encourage good bedtime habits with children, which will allow them to get the sleep they need.

The most important thing is to have a regular bed time routine that your children understand and that is reinforced most evenings. A typical routine would include the process necessary for getting to bed such as; cleaning teeth, going to the toilet, saying goodnight and then getting into bed. Perhaps having one story in bed or on the couch before heading to bed.

A really lovely idea is to make bedtime a special time each day when a special story is told. This works a trick for older children (3 years and up). Whoever is putting the children to bed has to sit in the bedroom with the light off (after the routine has been completed) and each child takes a turn to start the first line of the story for the night. The child might say “once upon a time there was a little boy who loves to jump on beds...” It is then up to the parent who is in the bedroom to carry on the story. You need to be aware not to make the story scary and to keep it at a calming pace so as not to hype up the children when they are supposed to be going to sleep. Limit the story to 5 minutes maximum and at the end of it, say goodnight and walk out the door.

It is important for children to understand that once they go to bed they are not allowed back out of their bedroom until the morning. Sometimes putting a clock in the room (children can match the numbers on the clock with what is written on a piece of paper) can support them to know what time they are allowed to come out of their room in the morning. Don't forget to give children lots of praise for staying in their room during the night.

A few extra reminders; don't forget to give them a reminder before bedtime – approximately 5 minutes before, keep reminding children of the bedtime routine, make sure you as the parent don't give in and stick to the routine.

I hope that these ideas will support you to make bed time successful in your household. For ideas on how to keep your children in bed during the night you will have to wait until next week. If you have any questions or would like to speak to Brenda – she can be contacted at the Nelson Kindergarten Association.