



# THE ENVIRONMENT'S ROLE IN SLEEP

The "Sleep Space" is the where your children sleep most often. Every sleep environment is different, but every sleep space affects how well , or how badly your children sleeps.

## What can affect sleep?

- Electronics
- Noises
- Light
- Smells
- Foods
- Caffeine
- Location
- Temperature



## The Facts

- Good sleep is an important part of overall health.
- Poor sleep related to the sleep space can seriously affect your children's physical health, emotional health, mental health, and social health.
- Proper sleep with a good sleep space can:
  - Improve overall health
  - Help the immune system fight illnesses
  - Better school performance
  - Help improve memory and concentration
  - Lower risk for chronic diseases
  - Make your child happier

## Your Senses and the Sleep Environment



**Sight-** What your children watch or see 2-hours before bed can affect their ability to fall asleep and stay asleep. Light before bedtime stops the body from making melatonin. Melatonin is a hormone that tells your body its time to sleep when it gets dark.



**Hearing-** When your children are asleep, their brains can hear and wake up to even the quietest of noises, This can affect their sleep cycle and cause health problems.



**Smell-** Our sense of smell is connected to the emotional center of the brain. Some smells, like lavender and vanilla can make your children sleep better. They calm the heart rate, and lower the blood pressure, and stress levels. Other smells, like citrus have been known to cause awakenings.



**Taste-** What your children eat and drink during the day can affect how well they sleep. Fat, caffeine, and not enough carbohydrates is linked to worse sleep.



**Touch-** Children sleep best in an environment that is consistent, comfortable, and free of clutter. The bedroom should not be too cold, or too warm. The best bedroom temperature is between 60-67 degrees.

# What You Can Do

Changing the bedroom environment to make it better for sleep does not have to break the bank. Here are a few simple changes you can try to help your child sleep better.



## Sight

Replace electronic time before bed with more calming activities. Dim the bedroom lighting, and try reading a book together, yoga, relaxation or drawing a picture about something special that happened that day. If the room is too light, try blackout shades.



## Hearing

White noise machines work, but they can be costly. Try static from an old radio, or relaxing noises your child can make. Have them cover their ears and listen to how it sounds like the ocean. Have them pretend they're on a beach to help them fall sleep.



## Smell

Certain smells like lavender and vanilla work very well in calming down the body to get your child ready for sleep. Try adding a small amount of lavender oil to their bath tub water, or massage a lotion gently onto their feet before bed. Avoid citrus scents.



## Taste

Certain foods can affect how well your children sleep. Try to limit the amount of caffeine and sugary drinks they have in the day time. If your children are hungry, a light small snack or small glass of milk should help. Remember to brush their teeth after!



## Touch

Try creating a sleeping environment that "feels good." Remove the electronics, noise, and night time lights. The bedroom should be a happy place to go to. It should be clean, cool, and comfortable with a temperature between 60 and 67 degrees.



## PARENT RESOURCES

- [Nationalsleepfoundation.org](http://Nationalsleepfoundation.org)
- [Sleepforkids.org](http://Sleepforkids.org)
- [HealthyChildren.org](http://HealthyChildren.org)
- AAP Program: "Brush, Book, Bed" is available at: <http://bit.ly/bedroutine>
- <http://www.seattlechildrens.org/clinics-programs/sleep-disorders/resources/>