Sleep after a brain injury

Getting enough sleep is important for all children. It is even more important after your child has a brain injury. Sleep allows both the body and the brain to heal. However, because sleep is controlled by many parts of the brain, sleep problems are common after a brain injury.

Why is sleep important?
Poor sleep can make a brain injury worse. Some of the ways that sleep helps the brain are:

• Giving brain cells a chance to shut down and repair themselves. Without sleep these cells cannot work properly.

• Shutting down activity to the brain areas that control emotions, decision making, and social skills. These areas are often affected after a brain injury. Deep sleep helps these areas heal.

• During sleep, new learning from that day is repeated. This may help improve memory and learning.

What are the signs of poor sleep?

• Irritability
• Trouble concentrating
• Lack of energy during the day
• Poor school performance
• Headaches
• Depression
• Hyperactivity
• Trouble learning
• Poor memory
• Trouble processing information
• Trouble interacting with family and friends

What are some common sleep problems?
After a brain injury, your child may have some of these sleep problems:

• Insomnia (in-SOMM-nee-ah): Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep through the night
• Too sleepy during the day: Extreme drowsiness even after good sleep
• Delayed sleep phase: Not able to fall asleep until late and waking up late in the morning
• Sleep apnea: Pauses in breathing during sleep (waking up and/or snoring)
• Restless legs syndrome (RLS): Urge to move the legs often when trying to sleep
• Bruxism (BRUKS-is-emm): Clenching or grinding teeth
• Sleepwalking: Walking or doing other activities while in a deep sleep
How much sleep does my child need?
This chart shows recommended amounts of sleep for children without brain injury. After a brain injury, your child may need more sleep to help heal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sleep Time per 24 Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infants 4–12 months</td>
<td>12–16 hours (frequent naps)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddlers 1–3 years of age</td>
<td>11–14 hours (fewer naps)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children 3–5 years of age</td>
<td>10–13 hours (infrequent naps)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children 5–12 years of age</td>
<td>9–12 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenagers 13–18 years of age</td>
<td>8–10 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Recommendations from American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM)

What are some things that cause sleep problems?
Many other things can affect sleep besides brain injury, including:

- Medicines
- Too little physical activity
- Too much daytime napping
- Pain
- Depression
- Alcohol
- Caffeine
- Nicotine

How can I help my child have better sleep?
Daytime routines, television, diet, medicines, and general health all affect sleep. Here are some ways your child can sleep better:

- Set an alarm to wake up at the same time each day
- Exercise regularly
- Limit TV and electronics time, especially 2 hours before bed
- Get sunlight each day (outdoor sunlight is best)
- Limit daytime napping
- Avoid caffeine and sugar for five hours before bedtime
- Have the same bedtime routine every day, even on the weekends
- Go to bed at the same time each night
- Stretch, meditate, or listen to calm music before sleeping
- Make the bedroom quiet and dark with no distractions
- Avoid eating, reading, or watching TV in bed
- Sleep only in your bed

What if my child still has sleep problems?
If your child continues to have sleep problems after having a good sleep routine, talk to your healthcare provider about other solutions. Sleep medicines and other natural remedies may be helpful for your child.

Notes

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________