

Tips for Better Sleep

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Quality sleep is vital to our physical and mental health, as well as our emotional wellbeing. Yet, many of us struggle to get a good night sleep on a regular basis. Now, imagine if you were rarely able to get a good night's rest and the impact that accumulated "sleep deficit" would eventually have on your ability to feel good and function well throughout the day. Individuals with Prader-Willi syndrome regularly struggle to get quality rest and are therefore at greater risk than most of experiencing the negative effects of poor sleep.

Here are some tips for helping your loved one with PWS (and yourself) get better sleep:

1. Establish a sleep schedule. Try to go to bed the same time each night and start your day around the same time every day (including weekends). According to the Mayo Clinic, having a sleep schedule and routine helps with the body's wake-sleep cycle.
2. Avoid caffeine or other stimulants in the afternoon and evening. Researchers point out it can take several hours for caffeine and stimulants to leave the body and therefore, can damage our quality of sleep.
3. Get physical activity during the day. Physical activity can help improve sleep, along with providing other health benefits.
4. Decrease stress. While this is easier said than done for many, research shows a connection between stress management and improved sleep.
5. Create a peaceful environment for sleeping. Having a dark, quiet place to sleep can help improve overall sleep quality. For example, if you find it difficult to sleep without any background noise, consider using a white noise machine or play soft relaxing music. (I have worked with several individuals who use a fan to help them sleep better. Some are more comfortable with just the sound, while others prefer to feel the fan itself blowing on them.)
6. Avoid screen time before going to bed. Numerous studies detail the negative effects of "blue light" from phone and tablet screens on sleep quality. For example, WebMD reports the blue light from electronic screens can decrease the amount of melatonin the body produces thus affecting our ability to both fall

asleep and to get quality sleep. Instead watching television before bed or playing video games, develop a calming bedtime routine that doesn't involve screens. (Note about e-readers: While reading helps many unwind and prepare for bed, avoid reading on e-readers or tablets as they too emit blue light.)

7. Develop a routine before going to bed. Establish a routine for yourself and/or your loved ones to help encourage a calm state before bed. An example of a pre-bedtime routine might include dimming the lights or taking a warm bath with Epsom salts or essential oils while listening to calming music. These activities can help you release any pent-up stress before climbing into bed therefore setting the stage for a relaxing night's sleep. If you have children, engage them in calming sensory play before bed.
8. Don't watch the clock. If you find you simply cannot fall asleep, don't watch the clock! Evidence suggests watching the clock at night can interfere with one's ability to fall asleep. Instead, get up and read or engage in another relaxing activity for 30 minutes, and then try to fall asleep again.

These are just some of many tips for improving sleep. Don't be afraid to get creative to learn what works best for you and your loved ones. Your minds, bodies, and souls will appreciate your efforts!