CPNI
Cyprus Paediatric Neurology Institute
Παιδονευρολογικό Ινστιτούτο Κύπρου

LEAFLET FOR PARENTS AND PATIENTS

Sleep problems in children

Good sleep is essential for learning, behaviour, mood and health. Sleep problems are common in all children, and even more common in children with epilepsy, ADHD, autism or other neurological conditions. Many sleep problems improve with simple, consistent changes.

How much sleep do children need?

As a guide, in 24 hours:

- Toddlers (1 to 2 years): 11 to 14 hours, including naps
- Pre-school (3 to 5 years): 10 to 13 hours
- School age (6 to 12 years): 9 to 12 hours
- Teenagers (13 to 18 years): 8 to 10 hours

Common sleep problems

- Difficulty falling asleep, or needing a parent present to fall asleep
- Waking often in the night
- Night terrors or sleepwalking, usually in the first part of the night
- Snoring, pauses in breathing or very restless sleep
- Teenagers going to sleep very late and struggling to wake up

A good bedtime routine

- Keep the same bedtime and wake-up time every day, including weekends
- Follow a calm 20 to 30 minute routine: bath, pyjamas, teeth, story
- Switch off screens at least an hour before bed, and keep them out of the bedroom
- Make the bedroom dark, quiet and comfortable
- Avoid caffeine, including cola, energy drinks and chocolate, in the afternoon and evening
- Get daylight and physical activity during the day

Settling and night waking

- ✓ Put your child to bed sleepy but awake, so they learn to fall asleep on their own
- ✓ Keep night-time contact brief, quiet and boring
- ✓ Be consistent: changes usually take 2 to 3 weeks to work
- ✓ Praise and small rewards in the morning can help older children

Sleep and neurological conditions

- ✓ Poor sleep can make seizures, headaches and behaviour worse
- ✓ Some events in sleep can look like seizures; a video helps us tell the difference
- ✓ We may suggest a sleep diary, an EEG during sleep, or sometimes melatonin, prescribed and reviewed by your doctor

When to talk to us

Please book an appointment if:

- Your child snores loudly most nights or has pauses in breathing during sleep
- Your child has unusual movements or events in sleep that could be seizures
- Daytime sleepiness affects school or behaviour
- Sleep problems continue despite a regular routine
- You or your family are exhausted

Sleep diary

Fill this in for 2 weeks and bring it to your appointment.

Date	Bedtime	Time asleep	Night wakings	Wake-up time

Contact CPNI

If you have questions or would like an appointment, please call our office on +357 22 476 627 or email cpni2007@gmail.com.

More leaflets and information: www.cpni.com.cy

This leaflet gives general information. It does not replace advice from your child's doctor.

Reviewed by Dr Paola Nicolaides, Consultant Paediatric Neurologist, November 2026.