



Primary School Children

Problems getting to sleep

Sleeping Sound

There are many reasons why children wake up during the night; these are some of the most common ones.

Delayed sleep

This occurs when a child goes to bed later than they should. Your child may:

- complain that they can't fall asleep
- be unable to wake up by themselves in the morning and
- often be tired in the morning.

The child falls asleep late and wakes up late. They often need to be woken up by someone else. During school holidays or on weekends your child will:

- go to bed late and generally sleep well overnight
- wake up by him/herself but often late in the morning and
- have enough sleep overall.

Sleep association

Some children are unable to go to sleep at the start of the night or fall back to sleep over night without a special thing or activity. This is called *sleep onset association disorder* and can stop children getting to sleep too. Key features are:

- your child needs something (e.g. music, certain toy) or someone (e.g. mum or dad) to get to sleep at the start of the night and/or fall back to sleep overnight and
- if that something or someone is not there, they will not be able to get to sleep at the start of the night or fall back to sleep over night.

Bedtime resistance

This occurs when the child stalls or refuses to go to bed at the right time. Your child will:

- have difficulty getting to sleep
- get in and out of bed or call out a lot and
- once asleep, sleep well and wake up often later in the morning.



Anxiety

We do not really know how common anxiety is as a cause of sleep problems in school children, but it is probably common. Children with anxiety may:

- lie in bed worrying about things
- tend to stay in their bed rather than getting in and out of bed all the time and
- tend to be a ‘worrier’ in general about life.

Insomnia

Children with insomnia have difficulties falling asleep, staying asleep and/or waking up early in the morning. Children with insomnia may:

- worry during the day about being unable to fall asleep or stay asleep
- seem to try hard to fall asleep at bedtime but seem to fall asleep easily at other times (e.g. when watching television)
- seem tense at bedtime and
- be tired during the day.

Restless Legs

Children with restless legs have an uncomfortable feeling in their legs when trying to fall asleep or during the night. Children with restless legs may:

- describe the uncomfortable feeling as a “creepy/crawly” or “pulling” feeling. This feeling may also be described as “growing pains”
- move around a lot in bed to try to stop the uncomfortable feeling
- walk or pace around at bedtime
- be unable to sit still for a long time and
- be tired or cranky the next day due to lack of sleep.

