



**Sleeping Sound**

Primary School Children

# Nightmares – Management

## **Comfort your child**

The best thing that you can do if your child has a nightmare is comfort them. Talk to them quietly and give them a hug. Following most nightmares, your child will be reassured by a few minutes of comfort. Stay with them in their room. Let them know that you are nearby and will make sure that they are safe and secure. Most children are still tired after a nightmare and will be ready to fall back to sleep. Avoid frightening or overstimulating images, especially just before bedtime (e.g. frightening stories, movies and television shows).

## **Give your child a security object**

Having a security object like a soft toy or blanket that your child can keep in bed with them can be helpful. This often helps a child feel more relaxed throughout the night.

## **Leaving the light on**

If your child asks to have a light on, put it on the lowest setting possible so that your child can fall back to sleep. Bright light can stop children falling asleep.

## **Discuss it the next day**

The next day, you may want to talk to your child about the nightmare to see whether there is anything that is upsetting them. Most of the time nightmares are events with little meaning, but if your child begins to have them often, you should try to figure out what is worrying them.

## **Encourage the use of imagination**

Some children do well with using their imagination to get rid of nightmares. Your child can draw pictures of their bad dreams and then throw them away, or they can try to imagine different endings to their nightmares or they can imagine their favourite colour as a big cloud pushing away the nightmare.

## **Ensure your child is getting enough sleep**

Make sure your child is getting enough sleep, as children who are overtired can have more nightmares.

## **Get outside help**

If your child's nightmares are severe, meaning that they happen often and are causing anxiety problems for your child during the day and at bedtime, speak to your family doctor, school nurse or guidance officer (school psychologist) or paediatrician.

