

## **Sleep Solutions for ADHD Kids: The Best Sleep Aids**

a podcast by ADDitude Magazine by Lisa Shives, M.D.

Studies indicate that people with ADHD have disrupted REM (rapid eye movement which is during the 4<sup>th</sup> stage of sleep) and experience more sleep issues than the average person.

It is helpful to get the buy in from the child/teen so they understand what they will get out of it. Have compassion for the person with ADHD since it is so frustrating. And, it is also frustrating for the parents whose child has sleep issues.

Sleep needs for the average person:

**5-12/13 yrs old** need 10-11 or 12 hrs of restful sleep.

**Adults** need 7-9 hrs. question if they report less than 6 and feel rested.

**Teenagers 9-9 1/2 hrs.** high school sets up a teen for sleep deprivation.

### **Sleep hygiene:**

- Parents need to model good sleep habits. It is helpful if the parent gets ready for bed at same time. Getting on pajamas, brushing teeth helps to move a child in the direction of bedtime.
  - Have good bedroom environment: cool and dark since core body temp drops during stages of sleep. Dark initiates hormone melatonin to be produced. Light triggers neurotransmitters, which is the biggest trigger for brain. Put away the cell, Ipad, notebooks, etc
  - Set clear expectations and have easy systems: bedtime, routines, dinner, sports, etc will affect schedule. Conscious trade-offs is part of parenting, so it depends on age of child. Therefore, you may need to feed a younger child earlier than older child with sports event.
  - Parents create a buffer zone of 1 hour before bedtime. Dopamine released from minor, brief exercise will induce sleep-ie: push ups. Yoga, stretching, reading. Experiment with different rituals, since ADHD person NEEDS rituals. Slow down the energy and turn down the light.

What are the effect of melatonin used long term? There is no evidence it is harmful. Melatonin may interfere with pathway of testosterone for teenager. It is thought that is may be a good idea of stop the use of melatonin between onset of puberty up through the beginning of college. Stick with low dose of .5 to 1mg. It is time related so take earlier, so plan

for it. It is more powerful as a circadian rhythm modulator. It does not create drowsiness like a sleep aid, but rather resets the 24 hr clock and can shift the sleep times. ie: if you have to get up earlier than usual. Give it 5-7 hrs ahead of time. In Germany, it is only available as a prescription medication.

What are the effect of using clonidine as a sleep aid long term? Dr. Shives recommends to try melatonin. Ween off the sleep aid, then see if melatonin will help. Use med to reset the internal clock, then ween off once a more normal sleep pattern is established.

5HTP-there is not much evidence if it helps. Risk is low to try it.

Always do this in concert with a MD who will work with you.

Ideal bedtime for ADHD child? Age, challenges, schedule, other family members, affect it.

Try a hot bath or shower- as the body starts to cool down it will help to encourage a drop in body core temperature. This needs to be 30 min before bed. There is good evidence to read to a child past the age when they can read since an adult reads at higher level. Future test scores and a child's vocabulary increases when a parent reads to a child.

Dr. Shives says that some people have used Benadryl. If you try it, then use a low dose and watch if drowsy when wake up. Nothing is approved for children since no tests are done on a child. Before using Benadryl talk with pediatrician or psychiatrist.

All sleep aids develop tolerance and dependence. Antihistamines can have paradoxical affect on seniors. It will make them wacko in middle of the nite.

With ADHD, any med can be paradoxical and make them more hyper and worse sleep.

Snacking before bedtime: in general, too much eating at bedtime is not good. Full stomach, and energy metabolism affected by full stomach. Eat during light, sleep during dark. The body does not metabolize food the same way at 10pm than during the day. Yet, unrelenting hunger can keep you awake. If so, have cheese, since it is protein and fat. Avoid carbs/sugar.

Middle of nite awakenings: go to a sleep specialist, need a comprehensive exam, may need CBT for insomnia. Readings: Richard Ferber and Wiseluth are authors. Sometimes, parents approach make the situation worse.

Parents need sleep to be at their best, so they need to protect their sleep. Self care is needed for parents!

Resources recommended by Dr. Shives

Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems, by Richard Ferber, MD.

[www.adhdmoments.com](http://www.adhdmoments.com)