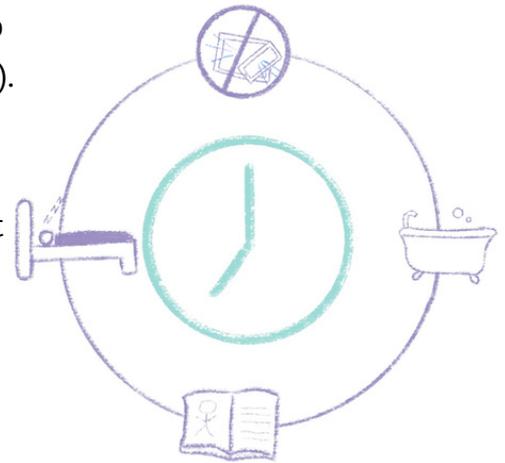


Sleep Problems

It is very common and normal for sleep problems to develop or increase after a child has spent time in PICU (or hospital). Children may be scared to stay alone in their bed, they may have nightmares or wake up more during the night. Sometimes children have returning memories of the PICU admission or medical procedures when trying to fall asleep. It is important that you don't worry too much but try to support your child as best as possible. This tip sheet gives you some suggestions on what you can do to help your child overcome his or her sleep problems.

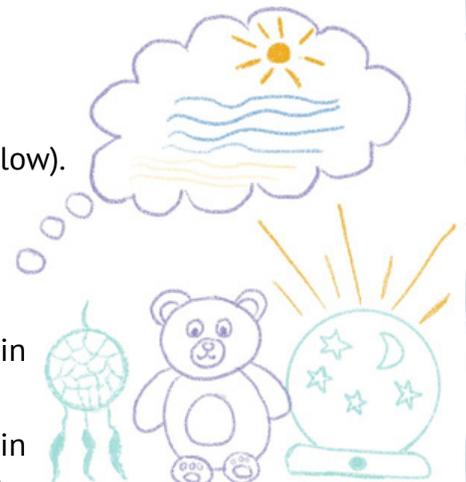
Keep or establish routines and rituals

- Try to re-establish previous routines when putting your child to bed (e.g., read favourite story, cuddle in bed, sing a lullaby, etc.).
- Aim to have your child in bed the same time each night.
- Burning off energy before bedtime may help children get to sleep, but too much excitement 1 hour before bedtime may not help for some children (no TV, no running around, etc.).
- Try to limit screentime in the hours before bedtime and try to limit your child's exposure to bright lights. This will help them produce the sleep hormone, melatonin, which gets them ready for sleep.



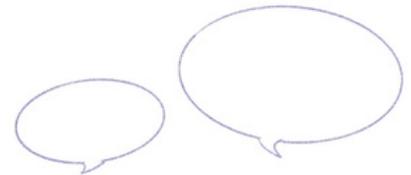
Help your child to feel secure in their bed and room

- Encourage your child to think about something nice at bedtime.
- Let your child listen to their favourite music.
- Use toys or a favourite comforter.
- Give your child something belonging to you (e.g., scarf, parent's pillow).
- Hang up a dream catcher in your child's room.
- Leave the child's bedroom door open a bit, use a nightlight in the child's room.
- For a short time (a few days), it may be helpful if your child sleeps in the same room with a sibling.
- For a short time (a few days), it may be helpful if your child sleeps in your room or come to your room if awake at night (only if the child asks to).



Calm your child if they wake up because of nightmares

- Go to your child's bed and give them a cuddle and kiss and tell him that the bad dreams will go away eventually.
- Consider creating a soothing kit specifically for nightmares and leaving this within reach and sight of your child's bed. This could include a soothing toy, something that smells nice, and hang up pictures that remind them that they are now at home and safe.
- For a limited time, stay with your child until they fall asleep again.
- Ask your child to talk to you about what their nightmare was about in the morning.



Signs that sleep difficulties are becoming a problem:

- Sleep problems are continuing or getting worse over weeks.
- The sleep problems are affecting the child's or the family's functioning.



Sometimes no matter how supportive and understanding parents are, children may need professional help to overcome sleep problems. If you are concerned, contact your paediatrician, or GP.

Personal Coping Plan

What I can do:

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