

*Sleep disturbance in the young
child*

Dr. Martin Maldonado

Sleep disturbances

- Importance of sleep disturbances
- Often, they go unnoticed
- Cause difficulty for child's functioning next day, and also in the night
- Cause difficulties for parents, like sleep deprivation.

Sleep disturbances

- Disturbances are quite frequent
- Around 20% of infants and preschool children, or more, have some sleep difficulty.
- They can be associated with medical illnesses or be independent of them.

Sleep Onset Difficulty

- Factors in the child
- Unique characteristics of the child
- Self-regulation abilities
- Attachment needs, security needs of the child
- Anxieties in the child. Stimulation during the day time. Traumatic experiences?

Sleep onset difficulties

- Factors in the family .
- Cultural factors, practices in each family, e.g. Co-sleeping
- Amount of time parents have spent with the child during the day
- Emotional availability of parents. If they have a routine or not
- If parents help the child to become calm or soothe him/her

Sleep onset difficulties

- Factors in the environment
- Noise level in the home
- Television?
- Adults speaking, making noise, argument, tension between adults
- Excessive stimulation

Interventions for sleep onset

- With the child
- Help child to self-regulate or become calm
- Reduce sensory diet, particularly prior to sleep
- Routine to help child to become calm
- Help to child to cope with stimulation, e.g. massage
- Vestibular stimulation, vibration, “white noise”
- Reduce separation anxiety, transitional objects, etc.

Interventions for sleep onset

- With the family
- Negotiate needs of the parents with those of the child
- Adaptations for the unique needs of the child
- Establish appropriate limits
- Help child to initiate sleep, routine, stories, songs, music, etc.

Interventions for sleep onset

- In the environment
- Reduce sensory diet during the sleep onset time.
- Create emotional and physical climate to induce sleep
- Reduce tensions
- Diminish over-stimulating activities

Disruptions of sleep during night

- Waking up during the night
- How long is the child awake?
- Does it happen at the beginning of the night or toward the end?
- How many times and how long?
- Are there factors to explain it?
- Is the child really awake?
- Sleep terrors vs. Nightmares
- Simple awakening

Sleep disruptions

- All children wake up
- Physiology of normal sleep
- What matters most is whether the child is able to go back to sleep without external intervention during the night.
- Minimal intervention by the adult
- Where does the child sleep? (cultural factors are crucial)
- What helps the child go back to sleep?
- The idea that the child should make himself sleep is a culturally determined wish

Disruptions in sleep

- Intervention
- One school of thought “the child should be ignored, and wait for him/her to go to sleep on own. Even if child cries.
(Ferber)

- Intervention
- School of thought: Gradual desensitization. Parents intervene, soothe and gradually do less and less.
(Minde)

Assistance to help the child go back to sleep

- Gradual behavior modification
- Understand the possible causes of sleep of sleep disruption
- Technique of “chaining” . At the beginning more actions are necessary and gradually less and less. Along several weeks.
- More success if the father implements technique (Minde)