

Let's Talk About...

Sleep after a brain injury

Getting enough sleep is important for all children. It is even more important after your child has a brain injury. Sleep allows both the body and the brain to heal. However, because sleep is controlled by many parts of the brain, sleep problems are common after a brain injury.

Why is sleep important?

Poor sleep can make a brain injury worse. Some of the ways that sleep helps the brain are:

- Giving brain cells a chance to shut down and repair themselves. Without sleep these cells cannot work properly.
- Shutting down activity to the brain areas that control emotions, decision making, and social skills. These areas are often affected after a brain injury. Deep sleep helps these areas heal.
- During sleep, new learning from that day is repeated. This may help improve memory and learning.

What are the signs of poor sleep?

- Irritability
- Trouble concentrating
- Lack of energy during the day
- Poor school performance
- Headaches
- Depression
- Hyperactivity
- Trouble learning
- Poor memory
- Trouble processing information
- Trouble interacting with family and friends



What are some common sleep problems?

After a brain injury, your child may have some of these sleep problems:

- **Insomnia (in-SOMM-nee-ah):** Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep through the night
- **Too sleepy during the day:** Extreme drowsiness even after good sleep
- **Delayed sleep phase:** Not able to fall asleep until late and waking up late in the morning
- **Sleep apnea:** Pauses in breathing during sleep (waking up and/or snoring)
- **Restless legs syndrome (RLS):** Urge to move the legs often when trying to sleep
- **Bruxism (BRUKS-is-emm):** Clenching or grinding teeth
- **Sleepwalking:** Walking or doing other activities while in a deep sleep

