

BRIEF INTERVENTIONS: STRATEGIES FOR SLEEP DIFFICULTIES DUE TO ANXIETY

**BI-PED PROJECT (BRIEF INTERVENTIONS: PEDIATRICS)
Emotional Health Committee Maryland Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics
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Appendix 3**

Many anxious children have difficulty with getting to sleep. They may also wake up in the middle of the night, unable to fall back to sleep, because they are worrying about something.

The following strategies may help:

During the hour before bedtime, the youngster should:

- **Develop and follow a regular routine**
- **Turn off all electronics except perhaps for a radio, MP3 player or CD playing soft relaxing music (TV, computer games, phone, etc. should be “off”)**
- **Stop physical exercise or high activity pursuits**
- **Eat a small protein snack (e.g. cereal and milk, cheese and crackers, or peanut butter and crackers, etc.)**
- **Consider drinking a glass of warm milk or some non-caffeinated tea**
- **Take a shower or bath**
- **Engage in a quiet pursuit that engages the mind but has a finite end such as a word search puzzle, a Sudoku puzzle, or reading a poem or a chapter in a book that is not too exciting**
- **Get into bed and turn off the light or just leave on a small night light (if they have fears of the dark)**
- **Concentrate on breathing or think about some pleasant activity or experience**

If the child wakes up worrying:

- **Keep a note pad beside the bed to write down what the worry is and any solutions that have come to mind**
- **Get a drink of water and go back to bed**
- **If the child cannot fall asleep in five minutes, turn on a low light and do a word search or a Sudoku puzzle – then turn off the light and try to fall asleep again**