

## Expert tips for parents

## Why good sleep vital for 'neurodiverse' children

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Most of us are all too familiar with the consequences of a poor night's sleep - be it interrupted sleep or simply too little of it. If you're a parent with kids at home, it often leaves you and your children on edge.

Children with neurodiverse conditions, such as autism and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, are even more susceptible to the effects of poor sleep, given their emotional reactivity and impulsivity. Struggles with sleep have been linked to increased aggression, irritability, inattention and hyperactivity in children with autism spectrum disorder.

We are three sleep experts - a neurology physician with expertise in pediatrics, a psychologist and a pediatric nurse practitioner - who are working together to help neurodiverse kids, including those on the autism spectrum, get better sleep. Two of us wrote a 2014 book for parents on the topic.

We are passionate about improving sleep because it's an opportunity to help neurodiverse kids and their families both at night and throughout the day to improve how they function in the world.

There are multiple reasons why neurodiverse children don't sleep well, including medical conditions, biological causes and behavioral and environmental factors.

Medical conditions, such as obstructive sleep apnea or epilepsy, can affect a child's sleep. Medications that are used to treat medical conditions, such as antidepressants for mood disorders or stimulants for ADHD, can further disrupt sleep.

Biological causes include genes that affect sleep and issues with processing brain chemicals, such as melatonin.

## Factors

Behavioral and environmental factors, including the common culprits of increased caffeine, too much screen time and too little physical activity, or any combination of these, can also affect sleep.

Neurodiverse children often struggle with understanding what's expected of them at bedtime and have difficulty transitioning from after-dinner activities to bedtime routines. They also describe having trouble "turning off their brains" when it's time to go to sleep.

All of these factors can be addressed and treated. A thorough evaluation by the child's health care provider may reveal a medical cause, or medication, that is interfering with sleep.

Behavioral approaches can make a big difference in improving sleep. These might include:

- Changes to daytime habits, including getting lots of morning light and physical activity.

- Shifts in evening habits, such as removing all screens (TV, computers, phones, etc.) and establishing calming bedtime routines.

- Modifications to how a parent interacts with their child for those families who would like a child to fall asleep and stay asleep independently.

While behavioral approaches can be successful in helping a neurodiverse child sleep, they need to be tailored to the needs of the individual child and their family. It's important to note that not all families want their children to sleep on their own. For instance, some cultures value a family bed, and in many families, children share a room with one or more siblings or other relatives.

Because there are so many factors that can cause disrupted sleep, addressing sleep problems cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach and should be done in partnership with parents.

Our team has developed a family-centered approach to address sleep problems in neurodiverse children. This involves brief behavioral sleep education, usually in an initial session lasting up to 90 minutes, and two 30-minute follow-up sessions. In this unique care model designed to increase access to sleep care for families, we train clinicians, including behavioral, speech and occupational therapists, to work with parents to put together a personalized plan.

After only four weeks using this approach, we found that children's sleep patterns improved, as did their behaviors, and that parents reported feeling more competent in their parenting.

Melatonin is a natural substance that is produced in your brain when it becomes dark in the evening. It makes us drowsy and helps set your brain's internal clock to promote sleep. Melatonin reduces anxiety and calms down an overarousal brain.

Here are some general tips for helping your child sleep better, regardless of whether they are neurodiverse:

- Choose a consistent bedtime and wake time. This consistency will help children's own natural melatonin kick in.

- Make sure bedtime isn't too early. For example, an 8 p.m. bedtime is too early for most 10-year-olds. Neurodiverse children may struggle to sleep and will become more anxious, which makes going to sleep even harder.

- Help your child get natural sunlight in the morning. Morning sunlight sets our brain's internal clock so that we can fall asleep more easily at bedtime.

- Ensure your child is getting physical activity during the day.

- Minimize naps longer than one hour, or after 4 p.m. for school-age children. Naps can interfere with going to sleep at night.

- Avoid caffeine, including many types of soda, tea and chocolate.

- Turn off all screens and smartphones at least 30 minutes before bedtime.

- In the evening leading up to bedtime, turn down all lights in the house. Consider using red night lights, if possible. Set any devices to night mode in the evening to limit exposure to blue light. (AP)



The Kuwait Chapter of The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (KCICAI) organized an event to promote healthy sleeping habits.

## 'Sleep is the best meditation': Dr Jagannath

## KCICAI event promotes healthy sleep habits

Balanced diet and exercise crucial for gains

## Intermittent fasting linked to health benefits improved well-being, says clinical nutritionist

KUWAIT CITY, April 22: Intermittent fasting has gained popularity as a highly beneficial dietary regimen often likened to a miracle. This approach involves restricting food consumption to a narrow window of time each day, typically around 6-8 hours, akin to the fasting observed during Ramadan, with the exception of consuming calorie-free beverages during fasting periods, reports Al-Qabas daily.

However, reaping the benefits of intermittent fasting necessitates complementing it with a balanced diet and regular exercise.

Numerous studies have highlighted the remarkable health advantages associated with adhering to intermittent fasting guidelines. These benefits include alterations in gene expression linked to longevity and immunity, leading to enhanced longevity and immune function.

Additionally, intermittent fasting promotes metabolic health by bolstering insulin sensitivity and mitigating oxidative stress, inflammation, and cardiovascular risk factors.

Furthermore, it enhances mental well-being by elevating levels of a hormone known to safeguard against depression

and other mental health conditions.

Clinical nutritionist Sheikh Ahmed Al-Qallaf affirms the benefits of intermittent fasting, citing both clinical experience and study findings. She emphasizes its significance as a recommended dietary pattern, underscoring its effectiveness in facilitating weight loss, improving overall health -- particularly heart health and insulin sensitivity--and enhancing cognitive function. Moreover, intermittent fasting demonstrates a favorable impact on blood sugar regulation and the management of type 2 diabetes.

Some people have difficulty starting intermittent fasting, she says. Therefore, it is recommended to gradually increase fasting by increasing its hours on a daily basis.

In the beginning, it is recommended to stop eating any food after dinner - for example at 9 pm, and then fast from eating and drink only water, tea and coffee during the night and until breakfast in the morning (for example at 7 am). Thus, you have completed fasting for 10 hours.

Then it is recommended to serve the dinner meal one hour early each day and delay the morning meal one hour

each to reach the recommended fasting limit according to studies, which is 14 hours for women and 16 hours for men. In addition to setting times for eating and fasting periods, the calories consumed must also be rationed. One of the goals of intermittent fasting is to reduce the amount of food eaten and curb the feeling of hunger. This is to reduce calories, lose weight, and improve health.

The following are the three proven health benefits:

- Studies have shown that intermittent fasting improves cholesterol levels and blood pressure, which are the most important risk factors for heart disease.

- Intermittent fasting improves the sensitivity of the body's cells to insulin, which reduces the chance of developing diabetes and improves the management of type 2 diabetes. People with type 2 diabetes who follow intermittent fasting notice its positive effect on their blood sugar levels, especially on their HbA1c sugar levels.

- Several studies have indicated that intermittent fasting contributes to improving cognitive functions and concentration and reducing the risk of neurological aging diseases, especially Alzheimer's.



Dr. Jagannath Chodankar

covery and mental rejuvenation. However, he cautioned against engaging in vigorous exercise too close to bedtime, recommending a gap of 2-3 hours to allow the body to wind down.

Relaxation Techniques: Attendees were introduced to various relaxation techniques to help prepare the body and mind for sleep. Dr. Jagannath emphasized the importance of establishing a relaxing pre-sleep routine, such as reading, taking a warm bath, or practicing meditation. He also introduced the concept of the "3-minute personal pause," a simple mindfulness exercise designed to promote relaxation and mental clarity before bedtime.

Sleep and Specific Groups: Dr. Jagannath discussed the unique sleep

challenges faced by women and children, highlighting statistics and potential solutions tailored to each group's needs. For instance, women were advised to prioritize sleep due to hormonal and anxiety-related factors, while teenagers were encouraged to implement a sleep plan and seek guidance from healthcare providers.

Dr. Jagannath delved into the unique sleep challenges faced by different demographic groups, including women and children. He discussed how hormonal fluctuations and anxiety contribute to sleep disturbances in women, emphasizing the need for prioritizing sleep hygiene. For children and teenagers, Dr. Jagannath highlighted the detrimental effects of insufficient sleep on growth, development, and academic

performance, urging parents to implement effective sleep strategies.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Jagannath reiterated the importance of prioritizing sleep as a cornerstone of overall health and well-being. He quoted, "Sleep is the best meditation", emphasizing the transformative power of restorative sleep in promoting physical and mental wellness. He concluded by saying "Tonight keep all your worries out of sight, just close your eyes and go to sleep and all the good times will be for you to keep".

CA Dhruv Sharma in his vote of thanks expressed gratitude to Dr. Jagannath for his enlightening speech and thanked the organizing committee, Annual sponsors NBK and Al Mulla Exchange, media partners for their support in making the event a success.

## Traditional Chinese medicine gains increasing recognition in New Zealand

WELLINGTON, April 22, (Xinhua): Patting the armpit and the elbow crease, stretching and yawning, hundreds of New Zealanders immersed themselves in a series of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) activities in Christchurch on Sunday.

Wang Lepeng, associate professor from the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, explained to the audience why to do the patting and knockings: "The liver likes you patting the armpit and stretching and yawning, and the heart likes knocking the elbow crease."

Local resident Felicity Smith experienced acupuncture treatment, tui na massage therapy and some TCM exercises at the "Chinese Language plus Traditional Chinese Medicine" lecture and exhibition held at the central library of Christ-

church, the largest city in New Zealand's South Island.

Expressing her long-time interest in TCM, Smith shared how she incorporates TCM exercises into her daily health routine with great enthusiasm.

At the event, experts from TCM schools and associations from all over New Zealand gathered for exchanges with the TCM experts from the Chinese capital Beijing. There were also video games about making TCM prescriptions for children to play at the exhibition.

Chinese Consul General in Christchurch He Ying told the event that TCM has gradually taken root in New Zealand. In 2021, the New Zealand government agreed to regulate TCM practices covering acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, and the tui na massage therapy, among others.

Nowadays, more and more Kiwis have accepted TCM as a useful tool to protect their physical health. He said, adding TCM, with its unique theories and therapies, has proved to be effective and made a great contribution to the health of people worldwide.

Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, TCM has shown significant effects from prevention to treatment and recovery, earning recognition of the World Health Organization (WHO), she said.

"TCM has not only helped keep Chinese people healthy in thousands of years, but also made important contributions to the global healthcare industry." He said, adding China has always attached great importance to TCM's development, trying to keep it alive, make it better, and use it well.

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