



KIDZZZSLEEP

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Sleepwalking

- Sleepwalking is a benign (not harmful) sleep behavior that is common in children. Sleepwalking and night terrors often run in families. Most children outgrow sleepwalking by adolescence.
- Sleepwalking occurs during the stage of sleep called slow wave or deep sleep. This sleep stage is most frequent in the early part (first third) of the night.
- Sleepwalking is not a sign of psychological problems. However, there are certain things, like stress, that make it more likely for someone who is prone to sleepwalking to have an episode. These include:
 - not getting enough sleep
 - an irregular sleep schedule
 - fever, illness
 - some medications
 - sleeping with a full bladder
 - sleeping in a different environment
 - a noisy sleeping environment
- A sleepwalking child may have her eyes open, but usually appears confused or dazed during an episode, and will mumble or give inappropriate answers to questions. Occasionally, a sleepwalking child may appear agitated. A sleepwalker is often clumsy and may perform bizarre or strange actions, like urinating in a closet.
- Sleepwalkers can injure themselves or leave the house during an episode. The sleeping environment should be made as safe as possible to avoid accidental injury. Floors should not be cluttered, objects should not be left on the stairs, hallways should be lit. By tying bells to the child's bedroom door, you will be alerted to the sleepwalking incident. Some parents keep their sleepwalker confined to the bedroom by securely fashioning a screen door or high gate to the child's bedroom door.
- The child who is found sleepwalking should be led back to bed.

Talk quietly and calmly to your child. Generally, nothing is gained by trying to awaken a sleepwalking child, but nothing bad will happen if she does awaken.

- If she spontaneously awakens after the sleepwalking episode (which older children and adolescents often do), avoid teasing. Sleepwalkers are not aware of their behavior and will not remember sleepwalking the next morning. Don't mention it in the morning, unless asked by the child.
- Children with nightly or very frequent sleepwalking may benefit from a treatment called scheduled awakening. This technique involves fully awakening your child 30-45 minutes before the time sleepwalking usually occurs. This seems to interrupt the sleep cycles and decrease the chances of sleepwalking.
- Relaxation techniques, including relaxation tapes at bedtime may also help prevent sleepwalking.
- If you have any questions about your child's sleepwalking, please ask your doctor.

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