Setting up a supportive sleep environment

Having a sleep environment that is supportive of self-settling and restorative sleep, is one of the easiest changes we can make to improve your child's sleep!

There are several elements that are important when setting up a supportive sleep environment:

Darkness

In the first 3 weeks, your child has residual maternal melatonin which puts them in a sleep state and allows them to sleep in almost any environment. After this wears off around the 3 week mark, child's become more alert and often more challenging to settle. At this point, darkness becomes an important sleep environment factor for settling and resettling your child.

Having a dark sleep environment allows your child to produce their own melatonin by enabling serotonin to be converted into melatonin, the sleepy hormone. A dark sleep space also limits distractions, enabling easier settling. Too much light blocks the production of melatonin and signals to your child's brain that it is time to be awake, making settling and resettling challenging.

The room should ideally be an 8-9/10 on the scale of darkness - it should be so dark that you would struggle to see if your child's eyes are open or closed from a couple of metres away. There are a range of temporary, portable and permanent solutions you can use to ensure you have created a dark sleep environment for your child.

Temperature

If your child is too cold or too warm, it can disrupt their ability to fall asleep and stay asleep. The ideal temperature for your child's bedroom is 18-20°c (about 65 - 68°F). It is important to layer them appropriately for the temperature of the room (preferably using natural fibres). Most sleeping bags come with a layering guide based on their weight. Generally adding a swaddle over the top of a sleeping bag is the equivalent of 1 clothing layer.

White Noise

White noise is a fantastic tool for settling, and acts as a positive sleep association in your child's sleep environment.

It is important to play white noise as loud as a running shower (50- 55dzb, a couple of metres away from your child's head)) and continuously for the duration of naps and night time sleep in order for it to be most effective.

White noise is a valuable soothing tool that provides a consistent sleep environment, and also blocks out external noises that may disrupt your child's sleep.