

E Moe, Māmā: Maternal Sleep and Health in Aotearoa/New Zealand

August 2012

Issue 6



Kia ora and Welcome to the sixth edition of the *E Moe, Māmā: Maternal Sleep and Health in Aotearoa/New Zealand* newsletter.

Since our last newsletter, the research team have completed data collection and we are now analysing this data. The analysis will be a large, but very exciting task! Thank you to our participants for providing us with so much information to analyse. The analysis phase is expected to take several months, and we hope to have some new knowledge to share with you by the end of 2012. We would also like welcome a new member to our research team Dr Alexander Smith who will provide us with his statistical expertise during our data analysis.

In the newsletter this month, Larine Sluggett, a Masters student visiting from Canada, shares her experiences working on the E Moe Māmā project as well as talking about her research on sleep and childhood obesity in Canada. Finally, with winter still lingering, we also talk about issues related to sleep, health, and the colder weather.

Interested in knowing more about your sleeping habits?

Find out more by taking a brief survey available through the E Moe, Māmā website.

The Sleep/Wake Research Centre is inviting people to take part in a poll that will look at the factors that contribute to a comfortable bedroom sleeping environment. The poll consists of seven questions taken from the American National Sleep Foundation *Sleep in the Bedroom Poll 2012*.

Please note that this poll is open to the general public and is not part of the E Moe, Māmā study.

If you decide to take part any information you provide will remain anonymous. We will update you on the results via the E Moe, Māmā study website and in our next newsletter.

[Click here to take the survey now](#)

Larine Sluggett

Visiting Masters Student from Canada

Larine Sluggett joined the E Moe, Māmā team for a 3 month period to learn about the project and take new knowledge and expertise back to Canada.

Larine is a Community Health Sciences Masters student at the University of Northern British Columbia. The research she is working on in Canada explores whether children who don't get enough sleep have a higher risk of obesity and early signs of heart disease or diabetes.

"Research has shown that sleep deprivation can disrupt hormones in the body that control weight and appetite. Other studies have also identified a connection between short sleep, obesity, and heart disease in adults. However, very little research has looked at whether children and teens might also be at risk due to not getting enough sleep. Our study aims to fill this knowledge gap."

Although the results of Larine's research aren't in yet, getting enough sleep is important for the health and wellbeing of youth for many other reasons, so making sleep a family priority is a safe bet.



In her spare time, Larine enjoys tramping with her dog Nimo in the mountains of Northern British Columbia.

Larine found working on the E Moe, Māmā study to be an amazing experience both professionally and personally.

"I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from the E Moe, Māmā team. I have been truly inspired by the expertise of the researchers as well as the care, passion, and ethics with which they conduct the research. I can't wait to see the results of this study!"



The Changing Seasons and Your Health



The winter nights are still cool, even though spring is not far away. The cooler temperatures and shorter daylight hours have implications for our health.

Cooler temperatures

When the temperature drops, adults add more layers of clothing and turn up the heat to stay warm. However, keeping infants at the right temperature can be tricky, because they can't regulate their temperature in the same way older children and adults can. Here are a few tips for keeping your baby comfortable and safe:

- Use a room thermometer to ensure the air temperature in your baby's room stays between 16-20°C. Babies should not sleep next to a radiator/heater, electric blankets or hot water bottles.
- When your baby is sleeping, dress them in light sleep clothing. To keep them at a comfortable temperature, they shouldn't be too warm in bed, so one more layer than an adult would wear is enough.
- If you wish to use a blanket when your baby is sleeping, use a light blanket, a sheet, or a baby sleeping bag. If using a blanket, place your baby with his or her feet at the foot of the cot so they can't wriggle under the blanket. Ensure the blanket is tucked in and reaches no higher than your baby's chest.
- To check if your baby is too hot or too cold, place your finger on the back of his or her neck or on his/her tummy. If these spots feel hot or sweaty, your baby is too warm. Similarly, a cold neck may indicate they are too cold.

Fewer daylight hours

The daily rhythms of light and dark provide important cues for regulating many bodily functions. In the winter, many of us are exposed to less sunlight because the days become shorter, and cooler temperatures lead us to spend more time inside.

For some people, this reduction in light exposure can result in fatigue, sleeping problems, or poor mood. The good news is, many people find relief from these symptoms through light exposure. Some things you can do to increase your light exposure include:

- Aim for 30 minutes of exposure to sunlight first thing in the morning. Even on cloudy days, the light you get from going outside is much brighter than indoor light. This doesn't need to be an elaborate activity; you could simply drink your morning cup of tea on the porch.
- Open curtains fully to allow light into your home in the morning, and close them at night to keep the heat in.
- Morning light exposure can also be helpful for the development of good sleep/wake patterns in infants, children, and teens. Eat breakfast together in a sunny spot, or bundle up and go outside to play!
- If you are concerned about any changes in mood we recommend you discuss this with a health professional.

E Moe, Māmā Researchers Part of Medal-Winning Research Team.



The E Moe, Māmā research team are part of the larger Sleep/Wake Research Centre at Massey University. Recently, the Sleep/Wake Research Centre team was awarded Massey University's 2011 Research Team Medal in recognition of their high quality research, successful working relationships with a broad range of research partners, and for demonstrating passion in the area of sleep science. Congratulations!



Massey University



SLEEP-WAKE research centre
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