



Barnsley Children's Therapy Services

Guidelines for the Safe Use of Weighted Blankets

Name:

NHS Number:

What is a weighted blanket for?

A weighted blanket can be used for children and young people with sensory processing difficulties to help with self-calming and sensory regulation. There is limited evidence about the beneficial effects of weighted blankets, but some parents, teachers and therapists have found them calming for some children.

What are the risks of using a weighted blanket?

In Canada in 2008, a 9 year old child with special needs died of suffocation under a weighted blanket in which he had been rolled in by his teacher. As a result of this incident, certain recommendations have been made regarding the use of weighted blankets.

Who should avoid using a weighted blanket?

Anyone with the following conditions should avoid using a weighted blanket:

- Breathing problems
- Heart problems
- Epilepsy
- Low muscle tone
- Skin problems, including certain allergies
- Problems with circulation

How can you minimise the risks of using a weighted blanket?

- Supervise the child at all times when they are under the blanket
- Do not cover the child's face, head and neck
- Make sure you can monitor the child's vital signs i.e. breathing, colour, signs of anxiety/distress/discomfort, possible nausea, increase in temperature etc.
- Do not roll the child in the blanket, place it over them
- Make sure the blanket does not drape over the edges of the bed or sofa
- Make sure the child can remove the blanket themselves at any time
- Never use the blanket as a restraint
- Do not use the weighted blanket in conjunction with any other weighted products
- Follow the manufacturer's guidelines
- Only use for short periods of time initially and increase as needed, under supervision



How heavy should the blanket be?

Good practice suggests the blanket should be as light as possible whilst still being effective. 10% of the child's weight has been recommended as a maximum e.g.

Blanket weight	2.5kg	3kg	3.6kg	4.5kg	6kg	7kg	8kg	9.5kg
Minimum body weight of user	25kg	30kg	36kg	45kg	60kg	70kg	80kg	95kg

Can my child sleep under a weighted blanket?

The College of Occupational Therapists (COT) does not recommend prolonged use of a weighted blanket. They suggest a maximum of 20-30 minutes. COT also advises that children are supervised when using a weighted blanket. They do not recommend use overnight.

For brief use of a weighted blanket to help settle/calm at night or during the day, the following guidance applies:

- Make sure the child can move themselves around under the blanket and can remove the blanket easily
- Remind the child that they can take the blanket off if they feel too hot or it is too heavy
- Remove the blanket once the child has fallen to sleep so that it is not in place all night
- Make sure the blanket fits on top of the mattress without hanging over the side of the bed

Where can I buy a weighted blanket?

These are examples of suppliers selling weighted blankets but it is not exhaustive.

www.sensorydirect.com

www.weight2goblankets.co.uk

www.cheapdisabilityaids.co.uk

Contact Children's Therapy if further advice or information is required: 01226 644396