Facts about Weighted Blankets and Directions to Make Your Own
by Linda McInnis

What Children May Benefit from a Weighted Blanket and Why:

My daughter with Rett Syndrome and Mitochondrial Disease would never sleep through the night. There was always something that set her off. A skeptic by nature, I never thought a weighted blanket could do much to calm a child. Boy, was I surprised.

Only those closest to my daughter have a remote chance of figuring out her ways. For instance, she doesn’t flinch at the sight of a needle, but screams loud enough to wake the neighborhood if she has gas pain. Her weighted blanket calms her down by affecting her sense of movement and touch.

According to the research, children with sensory integration issues often have difficulties with Proprioception, which is the unconscious perception of movement and spatial orientation arising from stimuli within the body itself. Have you ever had an ear infection and felt unbalanced or disconnected? You need a sense of equilibrium to feel...
safe. When you don’t have equilibrium, you may want to lie down and cover yourself with blankets.

The touch system is also very important to address in many tactile-defensive children. Even children who are oversensitive to touch, especially when it is unexpected, often seek out touch or contact. A weighted blanket gives the child the opportunity to seek a safe way to experience touch stimuli. Deep pressure can be very calming, particularly for children who have difficulty with tactile processing. If a child has excess hand movements or body movements and you put a weighted object over them it may suppress that movement.

Handmade Lap Pad from Special Need Creations [www.specialcreation.net]

For example, with Rett Syndrome, many girls have hand-to-mouth repetitive behaviors. Many times I have seen that if you put the child to bed with a weighted blanket it is enough pressure to stop the hand mouthing. The same effect is seen with kids using lap pads to sit still to complete activities. Sometimes the weight is just enough to provide a tool to relax the legs. If you think that a weighted lap pad is not enough weight to make a difference here is a fact that may surprise you: your skin can feel touch as light as one-thousandth of an ounce, the equivalent of a mosquito's weight.

**What to Look for in a Weighted Blanket:**

My tip is to focus your research on three criteria: Weight, Quality, and Style.

- **Quality**: The highest quality blankets are made using a quilted technique with each blanket weighted to 10% of the user’s weight. The squares of the blanket
should be evenly placed and no more than 8 inches by 8 inches. Fiberfill can also be added to the pockets to make the blanket feel soft on the user, like little pillows with weights. Lap Pads are usually weighted at a standard 2.5-3 pounds. Look for Lap Pads with channels that will distribute the weight.

- **Weight**: The most important material in your blanket is the weights. Poly Pellets (Polypropylene) are a great weighting material that will not melt in the washer and dryer. You want to stay away from food materials such as corn, beans and rice. They may get moldy when washing the blanket. Aquarium rocks should also be avoided due to the tendency to rip the blanket material with sharp edges.

Tip: When you first hold a weighted blanket you will think it feels heavy. You will only get the true feel of the weight once it is distributed over the child.

- **Style**: Choose fabric that your child will enjoy. If your child likes fairies, trains or dinosaurs, you want to get that fleece instead of trying to match the room. Whatever the child likes usually works best. I try to stay with a blue and purple color spectrum for a more calming color choice, although I’ve made many bright pink and red blankets that turned out well for children. For lap pads, standard blue is fine.

Tip: I like to tell the child: “Here is a lap pad; it will help you sit and keep calm.” Or, “Here is your new blanket that will help you fall asleep and stay asleep all night.” That way they get a verbal cue as well. I found the verbal cues work particularly well with children who have Attention Deficit Disorders.

Good Luck and Enjoy your Blanket!!

See the next page for directions on how to make your own weighted blanket, or visit Special Need Creations [www.specialcreation.net] to purchase one like the ones above.
Directions on How to Make a Weighted Blanket
by the Designer of Special Need Creations
www.specialcreation.net

Makes a 5 pound weighted blanket. Blankets should be 10% of user weight.

Supplies:
- High quality thread
- Fleece, 2 yards
- Coordinating Flannel 2 yards. Use a solid color so you can see chalk better.
- Muslin, optional, for a three material blanket
- Sewing Machine
- Small Scale
- Tailors Chalk
- Poly Pellets (only sold in some retail stores or online). Make sure they are Poly Pellets and not Polystyrene beads.
- Fiberfill
- Pins
- Funnel

1. Take the two yards of materials and pin right sides together, leaving one long side unpinned.
2. Sew three sides together leaving long side undone and turn right side out.
3. Once turned right side out, do a nice top stitch around the three sides.
4. On back of one side of material measure a grid pattern with chalk, usually no longer than 5x7 inches per square. You usually end up with 40-70 squares.
5. Sew vertical rows leaving the horizontal rows open. You want to make sure you sew only the rows upward to the opening so you can fill them all.
6. Divide the full weight of the blanket by the number of squares to determine the weight per square. Don’t forget to weigh the fabric first to subtract it out. You may end up with something like 2 ounces per pocket.
7. Fill Pocket by Pocket on bottom row only of horizontal row using a funnel. Add the calculated weight per pocket and a small handful of fiberfill. Pin in place. Make sure all the pellets are below your pins as you put them across the row. Sew the row closed. I use a double sewn row by row method.
8. Remove pins from prior row and fill the next line of pockets. Sew second line after pinning in pellets.
9. Continue to the last row.
10. At the last row, you can either sew the end under or use a serger. Either way, makes sure you double thread.

You can expect broken needles and a workout on your machine but in the end it’s a nice project.

Visit Special Need Creations at www.specialcreation.net for more information.