



CHILDREN & SLEEP

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW





One of the most common struggles many parents face is getting their kids to fall asleep early enough to actually get a good night's slumber, particularly on school nights. While we instinctively know that kids need more sleep than adults to support healthy physical and mental development; Many parents aren't certain about how many hours of sleep kids actually need. As well as, what the impact might be if their child misses even as little as a half hour or an hour of sleep on a regular basis. Because getting enough sleep is essential to proper human development and daily function, this may become a serious concern if parents start to see negative effects in their kids' health and behavior as a result of getting insufficient sleep.

HOW MUCH SLEEP DOES YOUR CHILD NEED?

If you wait for your child to just get tired and fall asleep on their own, chances are that they won't actually sleep enough, as there are so many distractions and types of stimuli that can contribute to keeping them up. So, it is important for parents to realize just how much sleep children actually need and set a proper sleep schedule for their children. The hours of sleep that a child needs are generally determined by their age.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) in agreement with the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) has set forth a list of guidelines that outline the number of sleep hours that are recommended for children from infants to teens to ensure proper development and optimal health. These guidelines, published in the Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine are designed to help parents ensure that their child is getting enough sleep and provides some simple recommendations to encourage healthy sleep patterns.

The established recommendations of sleep hours for children according to the child's age are as follows:

☾ **Newborn infants** require between 14 to 17 hours of sleep per 24 hours, and it is usually easy enough to achieve this with children at this age, as they tend to sleep naturally anyway. Nonetheless, if your newborn is fussy or colicky, or if there is a lot of stimulation in their environment, the infant's natural sleep pattern may be interrupted. Make sure that your newborn is allowed to rest in a quiet space without undue stimulation for at least 14 hours daily. Resist the temptation to turn on any lights or to play with your baby when he or she wakes up to encourage them to go back to sleep quietly and without much fuss in order to help them establish a natural sleep pattern based on the circadian cycle.

☾ **Babies between 4 and 12 months** of age should ideally sleep for about 12 to 16 hours per day, including naps taken during the daytime. Again, at this age, the child may attempt to become active or playful when they wake up in the middle of the night for feedings, but this should be discouraged, as it will not only deprive the parents of much-needed sleep, it can also prevent the child from establishing a healthy sleep schedule.

☾ **Toddlers aged 1 to 2 years** need 11 to 14 hours of sleep per 24 hours, including naps. At this age, it becomes easier for children to distinguish between day and night, and many children begin to sleep through the night without interruption. Toddlers should be encouraged to get most of their sleep at night with two or three naps during the day.

☾ **Pre-schoolers aged 3 to 5** should sleep between 10 and 13 hours daily, including one or two naps a day, to promote optimal health and proper physical and cognitive development. If kids start attending pre-school at this time, it is especially important to teach them to sleep through the night so that they can rise early in the morning feeling well-rested.

☾ **Elementary School Kids** aged 6 to 12 should ideally get 9 to 12 hours of sleep daily to maintain optimal health.

☾ **Teenagers aged 13 to 18** need at least 8 to 10 hours of sleep daily.



WHEN KIDS DON'T GET ENOUGH SLEEP

One reason parents have a hard time noticing that their kids aren't sleeping enough is the fact that when kids are tired, they won't necessarily exhibit the same signs of drowsiness as an adult. Usually instead of winding down, they actually become more active or "hyper." In many cases, insufficient sleep can resemble classic symptoms of attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), with kids pretending that they're not tired, resisting sleep, and becoming more and more "wired" over the course of the evening.

Some conditions, such as ADHD, can also contribute to insomnia and insufficient sleep in children. Doctors are also noting that sleep apnea, a condition considered until recently to affect primarily adults, is actually fairly common in children as well. Sleep apnea may especially affect kids who are overweight, large tonsils, or a narrow upper jaw. Sleep apnea causes brief interruptions in sleep, sometimes as often as every hour. Most individuals don't realize that this is happening unless someone points it out, or they are tested for sleep apnea. If your child snores while sleeping, he or she may be at risk for, or may even be currently suffering from sleep apnea. Because of the increased incidence of sleep apnea among children, the American Academy of Pediatrics recently recommended that pediatricians screen patients for this sleep disorder during routine checkups. Having your child evaluated by an orthodontist by age seven is also recommended to screen for problems related to jaw size or position.

Insufficient sleep, when it becomes a regular ongoing problem, is linked to an increase in injuries, obesity, and even hypertension. The psychological effects may also be dangerous, as sleep deprivation can contribute to depression, particularly among teens and pre-teens, increasing the risk of self-harm and/or suicidal thoughts.

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On the contrary, children who regularly get the recommended amount of sleep for their age demonstrate increased focus, a longer attention span, better behavior, improved learning skills, sharper memory, more emotional stability, a more satisfying quality of life, and overall improved mental and physical health.



6 TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD SLEEP BETTER

If you notice that your child is not sleeping enough, or exhibiting signs of hyperactivity, stress, irritability, unruly behavior, and/or decreased focus, here are some things that you can do to encourage better sleep habits.

Maintain a consistent sleep schedule.

Set daily bedtime reminders as well as morning alarms for each child, based on their age. When establishing a regular bedtime schedule for each child in the household, you may have to make allowances for age differences among siblings. Over time, the child's body will become accustomed to this bedtime schedule and it will be easier for them to fall asleep and wake up naturally on schedule.

"ELECTRONIC SCREENS AND GADGETS ENCOURAGE KIDS TO STAY AWAKE..."

Create a Bedtime routine. Creating a bedtime routine is a lifesaver for both parents and children. Children actually need and thrive on routine, as this kind of structure provides them with a sense of safety and security in knowing exactly what to expect every day and at what time. A nightly bedtime routine helps children develop psychological associations and habits that help them feel good about going to sleep. The bedtime ritual should

include a period of relaxation, starting about one to two hours before the child's actual bedtime. During this time, kids should turn off the TV and electronics, take a relaxing bath, play soothing music, dim the lights, and generally begin to relax and wind down. The AAP has developed a useful "Brush, Book, Bed" guide for parents, which basically contributes to improved oral health and good reading skills by incorporating tooth brushing and reading into the bedtime routine.

Turn off TV and electronics. The AAP also recommends that kids refrain from watching TV and using any electronic device such as a tablet, phone, computer, or video game beginning one to two hours before bedtime. Parents are also advised to remove such electronic devices from children's bedrooms in order to better control kids' exposure to them. Electronic screens and gadgets encourage kids to stay awake not only by transmitting stimulating content, but also because the light and electromagnetic energy that screens emit mimics daylight and stimulates the brain to stay awake.



Create a relaxing sleep environment.

Organize your child's bedroom so that it supports healthy sleep habits. Children sleep best in a room that is uncluttered and tidy, as well as sufficiently dark, quiet, and cool. Younger children may benefit from a night-light in the bedroom, but make sure it doesn't brighten the room too much. To provide a soothing sleep soundtrack or drown out noises from other parts of the house, use a fan to provide a rhythmic, steady sound, or play soothing music or nature sounds to help your child fall asleep.

Provide a healthy diet and daily

exercise. Good health is never about just one thing and developing healthy sleep habits are no exception to this rule. Among the most important contributors to getting a good night's sleep is eating a proper diet, particularly avoiding sugary foods and soft drinks in the evening, as well as making sure your child gets enough exercise throughout the day. Keep bedtime snacks light, healthy, and not too filling, to avoid any digestive issues that may keep your child from sleeping soundly. The traditional warm glass of milk is a great idea, even if you use a plant-based milk such as almond milk or soymilk. A light healthy snack such as fruit or crackers is also acceptable. Make sure kids brush their teeth properly and thoroughly after any bedtime snack before retiring.

Have your child see an orthodontist by age seven.

This size of your child's jaw may be impacting their ability to breathe and get a good night's sleep. If jaw size is a problem for your child, this is best treated early. By seeing the orthodontist early, you may avoid more invasive and costly treatments later in life. Additionally, you may be helping your child avoid years of inadequate sleep and all the problems associated with sleep apnea.

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