

Healthy Sleep Habits

Sleep is very important for everyone. All children require a certain amount of sleep each day to ensure proper mental and physical development. During sleep, the body releases natural growth hormones needed by children for growth, learning, and memory.



A poor night of sleep or inadequate total sleep time can lead to health problems in children, such as:

- Poor school performance and lower grades
- Decreased alertness and concentration
- Increased mood and behavioral problems
- Headaches
- Increased seizure activity for children with epilepsy

How much sleep does my child need?

Every child is different, and research has not determined an *exact* amount of sleep required for each age group. However, the chart below offers a good rule of thumb. In general, children and adolescents are encouraged to get as much sleep as possible, especially during their early childhood years.

Age	Hours of Sleep Required Per Day
Newborns (1-2 months)	10.5-18 hours (in periods of 2-4 hours)
Infants (3-11 months)	14-15 hours (4-6 hours per night and 1-4 naps per day)
Toddlers (1-3 years)	12-14 hours (including 1-2 naps per day)
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	11-13 hours
School age (5-12 years)	10-11 hours
Teens (13-17 years)	8.5-9.25 hours
Adults	7-9 hours

What are signs my child isn't getting enough sleep?

- Trouble staying awake to do normal activities
- Trouble thinking clearly or focusing
- Feeling sad, anxious, or irritable
- Falling asleep at inappropriate times, such as at school
- Extreme changes in behavior

How can I improve my child's sleep?

- Enforce a consistent bedtime and wake schedule, even on weekends and holidays.
- Develop a regular bedtime routine (same time and in same order nightly), which may include a nightly bath, story time, and brushing teeth.
- Turn off electronics at least 1 hour before bedtime, including TVs, video games, cell phones, and laptop/tablet screens to avoid bright-light exposure during evening hours.

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- Encourage periods of play and activity during the day, and avoid these activities in the evening close to bedtime.
- Limit the number of naps for children over 6 years old.
- Make sure your child avoids caffeine, including caffeinated sodas, teas, coffee, and even chocolates.
- Make sure your child is not drinking a lot of fluids or eating large meals 2-3 hours before bedtime.
- Dedicate the bed to sleep only at naptime or bedtime. Homework and playing in bed should be avoided.
- Make the bedroom a sleep-only zone, removing all toys, games, televisions, computers, radios, or other distractions that could keep your child from sleeping.
- Create a comfortable sleep environment with your child's preferences for stuffed animals, blankets, night lights, and music or white noise makers.
- Avoid sleeping in the same bed and room with your older child, which may cause disruptions or make it difficult for them to fall asleep when you are not present.
- Put your child in bed when they are tired or drowsy, not waiting until they are asleep.
 - This helps your child learn to fall asleep on their own and enables them to go back to sleep if they wake in the middle of the night.
- If your child regularly wakes up during the night, wait a few minutes before responding.
 - This encourages self-soothing and the ability to fall back to sleep on their own.
 - Do not ignore your child if they are very upset or distressed.



Speak to your child's health care provider about further medical evaluation if the above techniques and tips do not help improve your child's sleep.

- Do not give your child sleep aids unless told to do so by their medical provider.
- Your child's provider may recommend supplements or medications for improving sleep.
- If your child is taking something for sleep, be sure to mention it to their medical provider, as certain medications and supplements can have harmful interactions.

Resources and References:

<https://www.kidshealth.org/en/parents/sleep.html>
<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/children-and-sleep>
<http://www.sleepforkids.org/html/sheet.html>
<https://www.uptodate.com/>