



Health & Wellness

March is Sleep Awareness Month



How Much Sleep is Enough?

Sleep is very important for our children's wellbeing. The question is, how much sleep do they actually need? Unfortunately, there is no magical number of hours required at night for all kids. It all depends on a child's age. And it's hard to tell if your child isn't getting enough sleep based on their behavior. The link between lack of sleep and children's behavior isn't always obvious. When adults are tired, they can get grumpy or have low energy, but kids can become hyper, disagreeable and exhibit extremes in behavior. Read this newsletter to find out how many hours of sleep your child needs.

Source: KidsHealth

BABIES (UP TO 6 MONTHS)

There is no sleep formula for newborns because their internal clocks aren't fully developed yet. They generally sleep or drowse for 16 to 20 hours a day, divided just about equally between night and day.

After the first couple of weeks, infants may sleep for as long as 4 or 5 hours—this is approximately how long their small bellies can go between feedings. If babies do sleep a good stretch at night, they may want to nurse or get the bottle more frequently during the day.

At 3 months, a baby averages about 13 hours of sleep in a 24 hour period (4-5 hours of sleep during the day broken into several naps and 8-9 hours at night, usually with an interruption or two). About 90% of babies this age sleep through the night, meaning 5 to 6 hours in a row.

It's important to recognize that babies aren't always awake when they sound like they are; they can cry and make all sorts of other noises during light sleep. Even if they do wake up in the night, they may only be awake for a few minutes before falling asleep again on their own.

Ideally, your baby should be placed in the crib before falling asleep. It's not too early to establish a simple bedtime routine. Any soothing activities, performed consistently and in the same order each night, can make up the routine. Your baby will associate these with sleeping, and they'll help him or her wind down.

The goal is for babies to fall asleep independently, and to learn to soothe themselves and go back to sleep if they should wake up in the middle of the night.

6 - 12 MONTHS

At 6 months, an infant may nap about 3 hours during the day and sleep about 9 to 11 hours at night. At this age, you can begin to change your response to an infant who awakens and cries during the night.

TODDLERS

From ages 1 to 3, most toddlers sleep about 10 to 13 hours.

Parents sometimes make the mistake of thinking that keeping a child up will make him or her sleepier for bedtime. In reality though, kids can have a harder time sleeping if they're overtired. Set regular bedtimes and naptimes. Though most toddlers take naps during the day, you don't have to force your child to nap. But it's important to schedule some quiet time, even if your child chooses not to sleep.

Establishing a bedtime routine helps kids relax and get ready for sleep. For a toddler, the routine may be from 15 to 30 minutes long and include calming activities such as reading a story, bathing and listening to soft music.

Whatever the nightly ritual is, your toddler will probably insist that it be the same every night. Just don't allow rituals to become too long or too complicated. Whenever possible, allow your toddler to make bedtime choices within the routine: which pajamas to wear, which stuffed animal to take to bed, what music to play. This gives your little one a sense of control over the routine.

PRESCHOOLERS

Preschoolers sleep about 10 to 12 hours per night. A preschool child who gets adequate rest at night may no longer need a daytime nap. Instead, a quiet time may be substituted.

SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN & PRETEENS

School-age kids need 10 to 12 hours of sleep a night. Bedtime difficulties can arise at this age for a variety of reasons. Homework, sports and after-school activities, TVs, computers and video games, as well as hectic family schedules might contribute to kids not getting enough sleep.

Lack of sleep can cause irritable or hyper types of behavior and may make it difficult for kids to pay attention in school. It is important to have a consistent bedtime, especially on school nights. Be sure to leave enough time before bed to allow your child to unwind before lights out.



TEENS

Adolescents need about 8½ to 9½ hours of sleep per night, but many don't get it. Because of early school start times on top of schedules packed with school, homework, friends and activities, they're typically chronically sleep deprived. And sleep deprivation adds up over time, so an hour less per night is like a full night without sleep by the end of the week. Among other things, an insufficient amount of sleep can lead to:

- Decreased attentiveness
- Decreased short-term memory
- Inconsistent performance
- Delayed response time

These can cause bad tempers, problems in school, stimulant use and driving accidents (more than half of "asleep-at-the-wheel" car accidents are caused by teens).

Teens also experience a change in their sleep patterns—their bodies want to stay up late and wake up later, which often leads to them trying to catch up on sleep during the weekend. This sleep schedule irregularity can actually aggravate the problems and make getting to sleep at a reasonable hour during the week even harder.

Ideally, a teen should try to go to bed at the same time every night and wake up at the same time every morning, allowing at least 8 to 9 hours of sleep.

BEDTIME ROUTINES

No matter what your child's age, establish a bedtime routine that encourages good sleep habits. These tips can help kids ease into a good night's sleep:

- Include a winding-down period in the routine
- Stick to a bedtime, alerting your child both half an hour and 10 minutes beforehand
- Encourage older kids and teens to set and maintain a bedtime that allows for the full hours of sleep needed at their age

If you have any questions or would like to discuss ideas, contact Deanna at 530.796.3400 or dmoore@yochadehe-nsn.gov.