

Ways to help set healthy sleeping habits for children



Everyone knows that it is very important for children to get enough sleep, especially during school days. A parents busy work schedule, after-school activities and homework can all cut into family time on school nights and can have an impact on how much a child sleeps.

Experts have said that school-aged kids need roughly 9 to 11 hours of sleep -- which means they need to go to bed around 8 or 9pm, depending on the time they need to be up -- that does not leave a lot of time for anything else besides dinner, homework, and possibly a short bedtime story.

How much a child sleeps can have a lot of impact on their growth and development. Research shows that a lack of sleep can affect a child's temperament, behavior, alertness, and ability to learn. Children that do not get enough sleep nightly, have been shown to perform poorly on memory and attention tests.

Try these tips to help your child develop good sleep habits and sleep well at night.

Tips to help children develop better sleep habits

- Stick to a nighttime routine. A routine is essential when it comes to establishing good sleep habits in kids. Dinner, a bath/shower, putting pajamas on, brushing their teeth and hair, getting into bed, and reading a few pages from a book -- whatever your ritual is, be sure to stick to it consistently so your child knows what to expect and they can easily move through the routine every night.



- Limit the use of electronics before children go to bed. At least an hour before they start to head to bed, your child should not be using computers, tablets, checking their phone, or watching TV. Electronic screen activities can be stimulating and can interfere with falling asleep and staying asleep for children.



- Keep your children's room as comfortable as possible for them. You should always make sure your child's room isn't too bright, too hot, or too cold. If your child is afraid of the dark, make sure to choose a night light that will provide light but still keep the room as dim as possible. Dark, quiet and cool rooms are optimal for a good night's sleep.



- Set time aside for each of your children to let them tell you about their day. If you have more than one child be sure to give them each their own individual time to speak to you. It will let them feel loved and cared for. If you have a partner you can switch off nights to make it a bit easier for you to speak with each child.



- Pay close attention to what your children eat or drink before bedtime. Most parents would not let their school-aged children down a cup of coffee before bed. What you might not know is that caffeine may lurk in foods and drinks that you might not be aware of. Some chocolate, bottled tea, pudding, and even non-cola drinks may contain caffeine. Watch for these foods that contain caffeine and if your child asks for dessert, try to stick to healthy fruit especially when it's close to their bedtime.



- How much sleep a child needs depends on their individual needs. Some kids do well with just 8 hours of sleep but others might need 10 hours or more. Keep an eye out for signs of sleep deprivation from your child. Some signs are hyperactivity, crankiness, memory and/or concentration problems. If you do see any of these signs, make sure to get your child to bed early and be consistent with bedtime routines every night.

