



REPORT TO PARENTS

1/5/17
Kry...

The Importance of Sleep

How many hours of sleep do children need each night? If you answered “seven or eight,” your kids may be among millions of sleep-deprived American youngsters. Actually, the ideal amount of sleep for children in elementary school is nine to ten hours per night. Like adults, they suffer when they don’t get enough sleep. They can’t concentrate on their schoolwork, they have trouble remembering things, they may become irritable and fidgety, and they may be vulnerable to colds and flu. Clearly, it’s in your and their best interests to make sure they sleep well—and long—every night.

- **Make time.** Don’t allow their lives to get so full of sports, hobbies, and other activities that they can’t get everything done without shorting themselves on sleep.

- **Calm down.** Regular exercise is good for children, but exercise too close to bedtime can interfere with sleep.

- **Set a schedule.** It’s a good idea to have them keep the same bedtime and wake-up time every day—weekends and vacations included—because the human body functions best on a regular timetable.

- **Say “good night” at 9.** By tucking young children in by 9 o’clock every night, you’ll ensure that they get enough sleep, especially if they have to get up for school around 6:30.

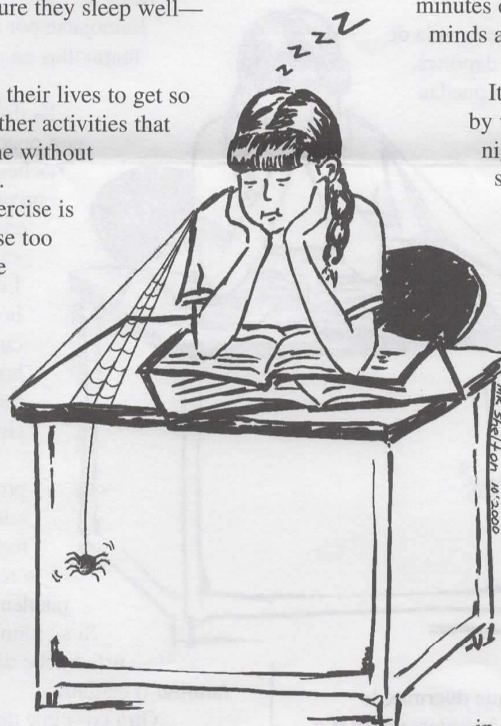
- **Be firm.** Make sure they understand that complaining about bedtime isn’t going to get them anywhere. This is one time when you can use that old parental saw, “It’s for your own good”—and really mean it!

- **Beware of caffeine.** Many popular drinks, including colas, are loaded with caffeine, a stimulant

that can affect sleep. Check the labels. If they want a drink before bedtime, give them caffeine-free sodas or, better yet, milk, fruit juice, or water.

- **Promote bedtime reading.** Reading is a great way to help children drift into sleep. If they’re reading to themselves, be sure to tiptoe in later to turn off lights because a lighted bedroom can disrupt sleep.

- **Soaking can help.** If your children are too wound up to go to sleep, try having them take a warm bath before bedtime. Soaking for even 15 minutes can do wonders in relaxing their minds and bodies.



It’s hard enough for a child to get by with too little sleep for one or two nights, but it’s ever harder when sleep deprivation becomes a nightly habit. That’s because the effect accumulates. Children

who get eight hours of sleep each night when their bodies need nine or ten hours wind up losing an entire night’s sleep every five days!

Children who have persistent sleep problems, such as daytime drowsiness, loud snoring, or breathing pauses during sleep, may have a sleep disorder. If your child shows these symptoms, you should discuss them with your family doctor or pediatrician.

Here’s another thing to keep in mind: The earlier your children go to bed, the more time you and the adults in your family have to relax and enjoy the evening. Maybe you can even catch up on your own sleep. Pleasant dreams!

For more information, visit the National Center on Sleep Disorders Web site, www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr