

# SLEEPING HABITS AND BEHAVIORAL ISSUES



A GUIDE FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN



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Most people would probably consider sleep to be the most enjoyable aspect of a healthy lifestyle. You don't often hear of someone complaining about having to sleep. There's nothing quite like that feeling of your head hitting the pillow and the sigh of relief as you nestle into your bed, ready to recharge for the day to come.

As a parent, there is probably no sweeter moment than watching your little one cuddled up with their favorite animal or blanket, sleeping soundly. But do you really know how well your child is actually sleeping?



One of the biggest side effects of poor sleep habits and lack of sleep is behavioral issues. Getting enough sleep is incredibly important to growing kids, and not getting enough of it can affect how they behave throughout the day.

As adults, when we get too little sleep the night before, we generally get cranky and move a little slower than we might after a good night's sleep. On the other hand, when children are tired, they are much more prone to mood swings, hyperactivity, and general unpleasantness.

Children who lack the proper amount of sleep might also have problems performing in school, which is all the more reason to make sure he or she is getting the proper amount of rest.



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What is the proper amount of rest, you ask? Well, there is no definitive answer, but there are some suggested amounts depending on your child's age:

- **Infants:** Infants can sleep up to 18 hours a day after you factor in naps. Of course, the times are varied depending on feeding times and amount of time they actually stay asleep. After 3 months, that will most likely drop to about 9-12 hours at night plus their nap(s).
- **Toddlers:** Toddlers, ages 1-3, typically need about 12-14 hours of sleep each night, and then nap once a day for 1-3 hours. At this age, toddlers can begin to develop sleeping problems, such as combating bedtimes and waking up in the middle of the night.
- **Pre-School Age:** At 3-5 years old, your child should be getting around 11-13 hours of sleep each night, and one nap per day. At age 5, they may begin skipping that afternoon nap. Most sleep problems encountered at this age usually center around fear and/or nightmares.
- **School Age:** After age 5, children need about 10-11 hours of sleep until around the age of 12. At this age, it becomes increasingly difficult to make sure they are getting the proper amount of sleep for a long list of reasons. There is schoolwork, sports, after school activities, and of course, the many variations of screens that might be keeping them up later than they should be.
- **Teenagers:** Once your child crosses that teenage threshold, they should be getting around 9 hours of sleep each night. This is also increasingly difficult to adhere to for all the reasons mentioned for school age kids, in addition to social activities.



## What can you do to help your child sleep better?

The first, and best, step to promoting healthy sleeping habits is to have a routine. Following an established bedtime every night, including weekend nights, is the best way to make sure your child is getting the proper amount of sleep.

It also helps to establish a time for him or her to wind down, which doubles as a reminder that bedtime is coming soon. This is a great time to read a book, listen to some music, or take a bath.

Cut off screen time! A good rule of thumb would be to have screen-free time at least one hour before their bedtime. Too much TV or gaming before bed will make it more difficult for your child to transition to sleep, as they stimulate them in a way that can prevent or disrupt their sleep patterns.

It is a good idea to avoid caffeine at dinner, and really, before if possible. You might not think it, but caffeinated drinks at dinner time can still have an affect hours later, which means they could cause sleep disruption.

Don't go to bed hungry, but don't eat a big meal before bed either. A light snack will do the trick: a glass of milk with fruit, or a bowl of cereal are great bedtime snacks! Eating a large amount right before bedtime can prevent them from getting a good night sleep.

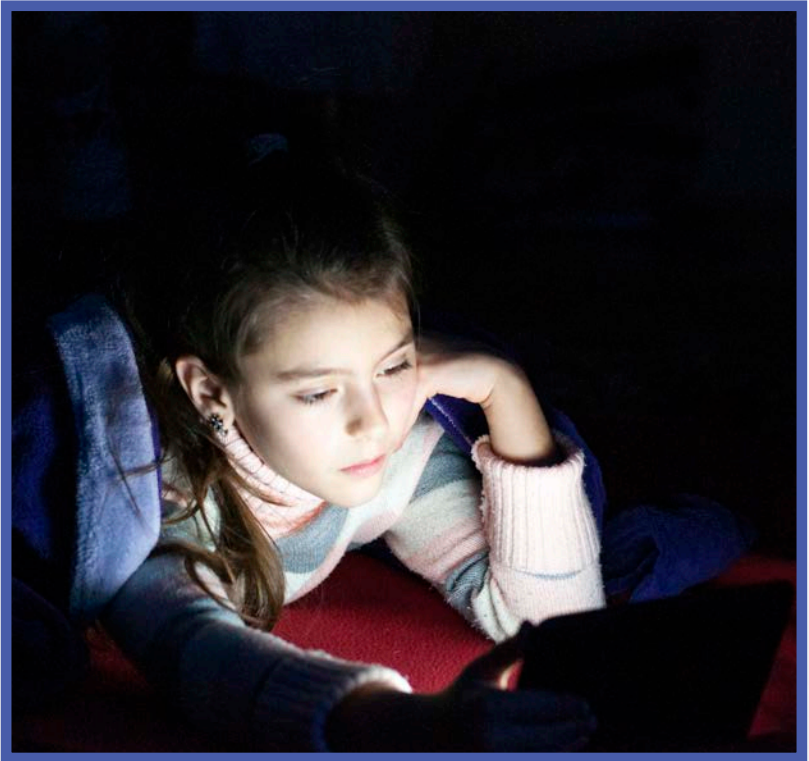




## Hold Strong to Your Routine

The earlier you impose a good bedtime routine, the more apt your child will be to follow it without restraint. The burden does fall on the parent to make sure those rules and times are implemented each day, and are not up for negotiation.

Once you have your routine in place, not only will your child sleep, and feel, better, but you surely will too!







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## Have more questions?



If you would like to schedule an appointment for your child, or have any other questions regarding your child's dental health, don't hesitate to give us a call!

Ensure your child is receiving the best dental care by selecting the right provider for your family's needs. At Dentistry for Children and Adolescents, we deliver oral health care that is comprehensive, accessible and family-centered for children and adolescents.

To learn more about us and the services we can provide your family, call either one of our locations:

Creve Coeur, MO at 314-567-1122

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