

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

How many hours of sleep do children need each night? The ideal amount of sleep for preschool-aged children is **10-12 hours per night**. When children don't get enough sleep, they can't concentrate on their schoolwork, they have trouble remembering things, they become irritable and fidgety, and they become vulnerable to colds and flu.

Here are some important things you can do to ensure that your child gets enough sleep every night of the week, including weekends:

- **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.
- **Set a regular time for bed each night and stick to it.** Saying "good night" at the same time each night will ensure a good night's sleep. The human body functions best on a regular timetable.
- **Be firm about your chosen bedtime.** Make sure that they understand that complaining about bedtime isn't going to get them anywhere. Alert your child a half hour before bedtime and then remind them again 10 minutes beforehand.
- **Empower your child.** Let him pick out his own pajamas to wear, stuffed animal to take to bed, etc.
- **Establish a relaxing bedtime routine,** such as a warm bath, playing soothing music, or reading a book. Reading is a great way to help children drift into sleep.
- **Beware of caffeine.** Avoid giving children anything with caffeine. Caffeine is a stimulant that can affect sleep.
- **Create a cozy sleep environment.** Keep your child's room cool, quiet, and dark (a nightlight is OK).

It's hard enough for children to get by with too little sleep for one or two nights, but it's even harder when sleep deprivation becomes a nightly habit - that's because the effect accumulates. Look at it this way, the more sleep your child gets, the more sleep you get!

(Sources: [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org), [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov), [www.sleepforkids.org](http://www.sleepforkids.org), & [www.kidzzzsleep.org](http://www.kidzzzsleep.org) )

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