

# Parenting Tip of the Month

## August 2016



Lower Elementary Teachers



Babies, children, and teens need significantly more sleep than adults to support their rapid mental and physical development. Most parents know that growing kids need good sleep, but many don't know just how many hours kids require, and what the impact can be of missing as little as 30 to 60 minutes of sleep time.

One of the reasons it's so hard to know when our kids are getting insufficient sleep is that drowsy children don't necessarily slow down the way we do—they wind up. In fact, sleepiness can look like symptoms of [attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder](#) (ADHD). Children often act as if they're not tired, resisting bedtime and becoming hyper as the evening goes on. All this can happen because the child is overtired.

There are some underlying psychiatric conditions, such as attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), that can cause sleep loss in children. Researchers and clinicians are also finding that sleep apnea—which most people tend to think of as an adult sleep disorder—is relatively common in children as well. A person who has sleep apnea wakes up many times every hour, very briefly, as they struggle to breathe. Most people do not know they are experiencing these events unless they are told or have a test to confirm sleep apnea. Children who snore may be at risk for or currently suffering from sleep apnea, which is why the American Academy of Pediatrics recently recommended that pediatricians ask about and screen for this sleep disorder in children at routine well visits.

If you suspect your child isn't sleeping enough, it's important to talk to your pediatrician. If there is an underlying sleep disorder or another medical condition at play, your doctor may refer you to a sleep specialist to discuss various treatments options. In many cases, though, sleep deprivation in children can be helped with changes to the environment and habits surrounding bedtime. Research shows that an early bedtime (between 7:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. works best for babies and kids through school age) and a consistent, soothing, wind-down



## Is My Child Getting Enough Sleep?

Many children go through their days sleep-deprived. When children do not get enough sleep their actions can be wrongly classified as "behavior problems." Due to lack of sleep, they may have trouble controlling their emotions. This happens because the part of the brain that helps us regulate our responses and actions is greatly affected by the amount of sleep we get.

Parents are sometimes unsure of actually how much sleep a child needs. The chart below was created using data from the University of Michigan Health System. It shows you a ballpark amount of sleep a child needs.

The goal is to ensure that your child is getting the right amount for him/her. Ask yourself these questions to determine if your child is sleep-deprived:

- Can my child fall asleep within 15 to 30 minutes?
- Does he wake easily from his sleep?
- Is she awake and alert throughout the day?
- Does my child often fall asleep in the car?
- Does he seem irritable, very emotional, aggressive or hyperactive during the day?

If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, your child may be sleep-deprived.

Here are some tips that can help your child get that much-needed rest:

- Pick a natural bedtime when your child gets physically tired and begins to slow down.
- Create a consistent, simple bedtime ritual. Include quiet activities such as a song, a story, a bath and calm, quiet cuddling. End the routine with turning the lights down and saying, "goodnight."
- Allow only two comfort items for sleeping - any more could be distracting.
- Be consistent and firm about the purpose of bedtime. Bedtime is for lying in the bed and falling asleep.
- Use bedtime as an enjoyable, resting, cuddling and sleeping time, never as punishment.
- Use dim lights for sleeping times and brighter lights during awake times.
- Avoid foods and drinks that contain caffeine throughout the day.

Sleep deprivation can cause behavior-related problems that affect your child's daily interactions with others. Children who get enough sleep are better prepared to regulate their emotions, think clearer and enjoy their day.

routine with no screen time—such as TVs, tablets, and the like—will lead to better sleep.

While every child is slightly different in terms of how much sleep they need, most require the following to be fully rested:

Age	Recommended	May be appropriate	Not recommended
Newborns <i>0-3 months</i>	14 to 17 hours	11 to 13 hours  18 to 19 hours	Less than 11 hours  More than 19 hours
Infants <i>4-11 months</i>	12 to 15 hours	10 to 11 hours  16 to 18 hours	Less than 10 hours  More than 18 hours
Toddlers <i>1-2 years</i>	11 to 14 hours	9 to 10 hours  15 to 16 hours	Less than 9 hours  More than 16 hours
Preschoolers <i>3-5 years</i>	10 to 13 hours	8 to 9 hours  14 hours	Less than 8 hours  More than 14 hours
<b>School-aged Children</b> <b><i>6-13 years</i></b>	<b>9 to 11 hours</b>	<b>7 to 8 hours</b>  <b>12 hours</b>	<b>Less than 7 hours</b>  <b>More than 12 hours</b>
Teenagers <i>14-17 years</i>	8 to 10 hours	7 hours  11 hours	Less than 7 hours  More than 11 hours
Young Adults <i>18-25 years</i>	7 to 9 hours	6 hours  10 to 11 hours	Less than 6 hours  More than 11 hours