

Sleep



“Sleep is that golden
chain that ties health and
our bodies together.”

Thomas Dekker

Sleep

Why is it important?

Sleep is very important for keeping our bodies healthy. After all of the busy activities during the day, our bodies need time to rest. When we don't give our bodies enough time to sleep, we may feel cranky and tired the next day. Getting enough sleep is important in keeping our families safe. Drowsy driving causes over 100,000 car accidents every year. A lack of sleep makes it difficult to focus on tasks. This means it can also effect children trying to learn at school. Children who do not get enough sleep often have a hard time paying attention in class, thinking clearly, and following directions.

How much do I need?

The amount of sleep that a person needs depends greatly on their age. In the earlier years of life, children need more sleep than adults. These are the years that most of the physical and mental development occurs. Refer to your doctor to find out how much your child should be sleeping to stay healthy. In general, the

How Much Sleep Do You Really Need?	
Age	Sleep Needs
Newborns (0-2 months)	12-18 hours
Infants (3 to 11 months)	14 to 15 hours
Toddlers (1-3 years)	12 to 14 hours
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	11 to 13 hours
School-age children (5-10 years)	10 to 11 hours
Teens (10-17)	8.5-9.25 hours
Adults	7-9 hours

Source: National Sleep Foundation

following age groups are recommended the following amount of sleep:

Newborns: New babies need to wake up every couple of hours to eat. Place them on their backs in a crib that meets all safety standards. Avoid putting blankets, pillows, or toys in the crib.

Infants: Be sure to place infants on their backs to sleep. Try putting them into their crib before they fall asleep to teach them how to fall asleep on their own.

Toddlers: Your child should still sleep in a safe crib, but can now have a light blanket to sleep with. At this age, some children begin to condense their two afternoon naps into one nap.

Preschoolers: Preschoolers usually still need a nap during the day. It is important at this age to develop consistent sleep habits.

School-age Children: Sleep problems can occur for many reasons at this age. Sleep deprived children may be hyper and have a hard time at school. Be sure to develop a consistent bedtime.

Teens: Many teenagers try to make up for lost sleep during the weekends. Lack of sleep during the week leads to trouble in school and unsafe driving. Try to encourage your teen to go to bed at the same time each night.

How can my family and I sleep better?

If you find it is difficult for you or your children to fall asleep, or to stay asleep, there are many techniques you can try.

- **Set a regular bedtime and wake up time:** Find out how much sleep is recommended for you, and try to get that amount of sleep every night.

Having a set sleep/wake schedule can help you get a better night's sleep.



- **Develop a regular bedtime routine:** Alert your child 30, and 10 minutes before it is time for bed. Include a winding down activity such as reading a book or listening to soft music. Regular teeth brushing in a bedtime routine can help develop good habits.

- **Avoid drinking caffeine after 3:00 in the afternoon:** Caffeine is a stimulant that keeps your body awake. Limit caffeine intake, especially 4-6 hours before bedtime.
- **Exercise daily, but not late at night:** Regular exercise can help a person sleep much better. However, exercising late in the day can actually make it harder to fall asleep.
- **Avoid eating big meals right before bed:** It can be difficult to sleep right after a big meal. If you feel hungry before bed, try having a small, light snack.
- **Sleep in a dark, comfortable room:** Being comfortable is very important when you are trying to fall asleep. Make sure the bed is not too crowded with clothes, toys, or pillows. Try to make the room a good temperature for sleeping. Add a fan or a blanket if the temperature is not right. If your child is afraid of the dark, provide a small, dim night-light.
- **Avoid smoking and alcohol before sleep:** Although many people believe that tobacco and alcohol helps relax them before bed, it often does the opposite. Drinking alcohol before sleeping can lead to more waking in the night, and lessens the amount of deep sleep.
- **Try writing in a journal before bed:** This activity can help clear your mind before getting into bed. This can help you fall asleep faster without worrying about today or tomorrow.



Sources: <http://kidshealth.org/kid/talk/qa/sleep.html>
http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/sleep/sleep.html?tracking=P_RelatedArticle#
<http://www.apa.org/topics/sleep/why.aspx>