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Preschoolers

Preschoolers sleep about 11 to 12 hours per night. Those who get enough rest at night may no longer need a daytime nap. Instead, they may benefit from some quiet time in the afternoon.

Most nursery schools and kindergartens have quiet periods when the children lie on mats or just rest. As children give up their naps, they may go to bed at night earlier than they did as toddlers.

School-Age Children and Preteens

School-age children need 10 to 11 hours of sleep a night. Bedtime problems can start at this age for a variety of reasons. Homework, sports and after-school activities, computers, TVs, mobile devices, and hectic family schedules all can contribute to children not getting the sleep they need.

Sleep-deprived children can become hyper or irritable, and may have a hard time paying attention in school.

It's still important to have a consistent bedtime, especially on school nights. Leave enough technology-free time before bed to allow your child to unwind before lights-out. A good rule of thumb is switching off the electronics at least an hour before bed and keeping TVs, computers, and mobile devices out of children bedrooms.

Teens

Teens need about 9 hours of sleep per night, but many do not get it. Early school start times on top of schedules packed with school, homework, friends, and activities mean that many are chronically sleep deprived.

Sleep deprivation adds up over time, so an hour less per night is like a full night without sleep by the end of the week. Among other things, a lack of sleep can lead to:

- being less attentive
- inconsistent performance
- short-term memory loss
- delayed response time

This can lead to anger problems, trouble in school (academically and with teachers and peers), the use of stimulants like caffeine or energy drinks to feel more awake, and car crashes due to delayed response times or falling asleep at the wheel.

Teens also undergo a change in their sleep patterns - their bodies want to stay up late and wake up later, which often leads to them trying to catch up on sleep during the weekend. But this irregularity can make getting to sleep at a reasonable hour during the week even harder.

Ideally, a teen should try to go to bed at the same time every night and wake up at the same time every morning, allowing for at least 9 hours of sleep.

Bedtime Routines

No matter what your child's age, establish a bedtime routine that encourages good sleep habits. These tips can help children ease into a good night's sleep:

- Stick to a bedtime, and give your children a heads-up 30 minutes and then 10 minutes beforehand.
- Include a winding-down period in the routine.
- Encourage older children and teens to set and maintain a bedtime that allows for the full hours of sleep needed at their age.

