

Issue Overview

Welcome to the 2013-14 school year. For a fifth year, School Psychology Services will be providing a series of newsletters over the course of the school year to bring parents timely information on topics of interest. We think you will enjoy this resource.

Hopefully, it was a restful summer. As a new school year begins, we are filled with renewed energy for the year that lies ahead. However, those stores of energy can evaporate quickly if we are not getting enough sleep each night.

This issue will take a look at the importance of sleep and provide parents with some strategies to help get their child's sleep patterns back on track. If you need more support, do not hesitate to contact your school psychologist this school year.

Your School Psychologist

The Need for Sleep: How Important is It?

Sleep is a necessary part of life. We spend nearly a third of our lives sleeping. Our bodies do a lot of work while we sleep which helps us to refuel and stay healthy and happy. Sleep is also when we consolidate all the information we learned during the day and thus, plays an important part in memory and learning.

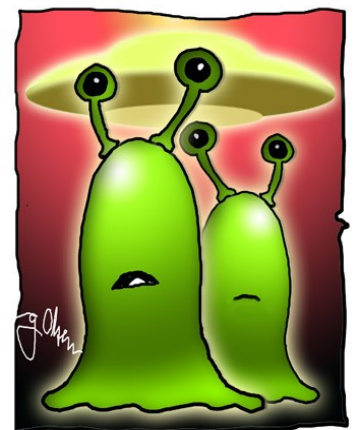
We have long known the importance of sleep in helping children perform their best at school. However, research shows that sleep deprivation for children is widespread leading to serious consequences such as:

- Academic struggles and low grades in school
- Impaired cognitive functioning and low standardized test scores
- Emotional difficulties such as depression and anxiety
- Behavior problems and inattention
- Health problems including weight gain and asthma
- Greater risk of injuries or automobile accidents

There is no "magic number" to the amount of sleep one needs. Different age groups need different amounts of sleep, but sleep needs are still very individual. The sleep one person needs to be rested and alert can be completely different than the sleep needed for a person of similar age. Thus, it is important to learn your child's personal sleep needs. If your child continually feels tired all the time, spends much less or more time in bed, naps during the day or cuts down physical activities, then it is likely your child is not getting enough sleep and needs your support.

Did You Know?: Interesting Facts About Sleep

- A single night of partial sleep deprivation is enough to impair our immune system and heighten our risk of acquiring a virus or illness.
- Sleeping in during the weekends does not compensate for lack of sleep during the week. It confuses our bodies in making it harder to fall asleep at a routine time each night. Continually relying on daily naps has a similar effect.
- The onset of puberty brings hormonal changes that may make it more difficult for adolescents to fall asleep earlier in the evening.
- Adolescents show a need of 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep per night. However, less than 15% of adolescents meet this requirement during the weekdays.
- Using sleeping pills for more than a couple days in a row can create a vicious cycle of dependence on them in order to fall asleep.



"We come in peace, and we need your help. How do you tolerate teenagers?"

Gary Olsen, Dubuque Schools, www.dubuque.k12.ia.us

Improving Your Child's Sleep: **What Can Parents Do?**

- Set the example. Show your child that your own sleep is a priority.
- It is essential that parents monitor and enforce the amount of sleep of their children. Refer to the sleep guidelines to the right and ensure your child falls within the recommended hours. Since children have to get up early for school, bedtimes should be pushed back earlier in the evening.
- Make sure that your child has daily exercise which tires them at night.
- Ask your child to try going to bed earlier for just a few days. Hopefully, they notice a positive change in how they feel. Once children experience that their performance improves in all things, from sports to academics, they will likely need less convincing to stick to a reasonable bedtime.
- Keep the same sleep/wake schedule, whether it's a weekday or a weekend. Consistency is key so make an effort not to let bedtime vary by more than an hour. Children sleeping longer on the weekends is a sign they are sleep deprived. Likewise, high energy levels with less emotional control in children at night may signal sleep deprivation.
- Create a regular, relaxing bedtime routine such as taking a bath or reading books that begins about an hour before bedtime. This helps provide the body with a trigger indicating that sleep is coming.
- Caffeinated drinks should be limited during the day, but especially late in the day or evening (e.g., 3 to 5 hours prior to bedtime). Dinner time should also be kept as constant as possible as late night eating can throw off sleep schedules.
- Ensure that the bedroom is for sleeping, not entertainment. This means shutting off phones, TVs, computers, and video games...or moving them out of their bedrooms altogether. Exposure to bright lights at night, has been shown to make people more wide awake as it stimulates the brain. Children also need time at night to unwind. Thus, avoid electronics an hour or so prior to bedtime and encourage quiet activities (e.g., reading) that lower the level of arousal.
- When possible, children should have their own consistent sleeping space with bed sharing avoided. Adequate temperature control is also helpful.
- White noise in the background may be helpful for some children.
- Adults staying up later than children should make an effort to keep down sound and light levels in the house.
- Keep a sleep diary to track quantity and quality of sleep to better understand sleep habits and measure progress.
- For children suspected of having a serious sleep problem, please consult with your school psychologist, school social worker, or school counselor. In some cases, a referral to a pediatrician or a sleep medicine specialist may be necessary.

How Much Sleep Do You Really Need?

The National Sleep Foundation recommends the following average sleep needs according to age.

0-2 months	=	12 to 18 hours
3-11 months	=	14 to 15 hours
1-3 years	=	12 to 14 hours
3-5 years	=	11 to 13 hours
5-10 years	=	10 to 11 hours
10-17 years	=	8.5 to 9.5 hours
18+ years	=	7 to 9 hours

Is Your Child Getting Enough Sleep?

Parents can gauge if their child is getting the proper sleep if the child does the following three things on a regular basis:

- 1) Your child falls asleep within 15 to 30 minutes.
- 2) Your child wakes up easily at the time needed to get up without parents constantly bugging him/her to get up.
- 3) Your child stays awake and alert all day without a daytime nap.

From the Research

Rats who are completely sleep-deprived in scientific experiments die faster than ones who are totally deprived of food.

Resource on the Web

National Sleep Foundation
www.sleepfoundation.org



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