

SLEEP



"We need to focus as much on the sleeping half of children's lives as we do on the waking half."
Jodi A. Mindell, PhD

WHY IS SLEEP IMPORTANT?

Sleep is vital to human life. While we are sleeping:

- muscles, bones, and skin are repairing themselves
- the immune system is strengthening itself
- the brain is sorting through the input it received during the day, discarding what it doesn't need, and solidifying what it does need

A COMMON MYTH is that if children have a lot of energy, they must be getting enough sleep. In fact, hyperactivity or "being wired" can be a red flag that your child is not getting enough sleep, and that their body is compensating for being over-tired.

HOW MUCH SLEEP DO WE NEED IN A DAY?

0-3 Years: 16-20 hours in 1-4 hour periods

3-6 Years: 10-11 hours

6-12 Years: 10-11 hours; daytime sleepiness is rare

13-19 Years: 8-9 hours; daytime sleepiness is common

SLEEP PROBLEMS are not uncommon but often go undiagnosed. Please talk with your physician for a referral to the Youthdale Child and Adolescent Sleep Centre if you believe your child had a sleep disorder.

WEB RESOURCES

www.sleepforkids.org

www.youthdalesleep.com

www.akronchildrens.org/cms/sleep_center/index.htm

SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD MAY HAVE A SLEEP PROBLEM:

- apnea (snoring, pauses in breathing, or gasping for breath during sleep)
- difficulty falling asleep at night
- frequent waking in the night
- complaints of leg pain or restlessness in the night
- looking to a parent for help to fall asleep
- night terrors
- sleepwalking/sleep talking
- behaviour problems, hyperactivity, problems with attention and/or memory, mood swings
- difficulty staying awake during the day

QUICK TIPS FOR HEALTHY SLEEP

- set a regular bedtime and stick to it as much as possible
- no TV or computers after dinner
- create a consistent bedtime routine that is relaxing and enjoyable. This should be about 30 minutes long and include relaxing activities such as reading a book or taking a bath that will let the body know that it is time to rest.
- make after-dinner play time a relaxing time, with the idea of winding down rather than winding up as bedtime approaches
- use a visual schedule depicting bedtime routine (make your own at www.connectability.ca/visuals-engine)
- if your child has sensory issues, your Occupational Therapist may recommend massage, turning pajamas inside out, or other ways of addressing sensory challenges
- share one kiss or hug goodnight, and avoid giving in to requests for more

