

## **Kids and Sleep: How Much Is Enough?**

What happens when your kid doesn't get enough sleep? Does he turn into Oscar the Grouch? Not a surprise, really. But moodiness isn't the only downside of a lack of shuteye.

Sleep is critical for mental and physical development. In fact, a lack of sleep can lead to serious health problems such as high blood pressure, injuries, diabetes, and obesity in kids, as well as depression in teens (and adults).<sup>1,2</sup>

**Sleep guidelines for kids.** About a year ago, the American Academy of Pediatrics came out with new sleep guidelines for kids. In case you missed it, here's what they now recommend:

- Infants 4 to 12 months: 12 to 16 hours (including naps)
- Kids 1 to 2 years: 11 to 14 hours (including naps)
- Kids 3 to 5 years: 10 to 13 hours (including naps)
- Kids 6 to 12 years: 9 to 12 hours
- Teens: 8 to 10 hours<sup>1</sup>

Guidelines are more challenging to devise for infants younger than four months. That's because there is so much variation among young infants as they begin to develop regular sleep-wake cycles.<sup>1,2</sup>

**Signs of sleeplessness.** How can you tell if your child isn't getting enough sleep? Here are some telltale signs. Your child may:

- Have trouble waking up and getting moving within 15 minutes.
- Sleep at least two hours longer during weekends or vacations than during the school week.
- Fall asleep during short car trips or at school.
- Have trouble remembering, paying attention, and learning.
- Be irritable or hyperactive.<sup>1,3</sup>

About that hyperactivity—that's counterintuitive and can really throw parents. When you're tired, you probably slow down. But kids can really wind up when they

haven't gotten enough sleep, and will resist going bedtime, even if they're bone-tired. This sign can look a lot like attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder.<sup>4</sup>

**What you can do.** Yes, I know: Getting kids to bed at night is easier said than done. But it's worth the effort, because quality sleep is not a luxury. You can make a difference in a number of ways.

For example, help your child learn how to prioritize and focus on the activities he or she really enjoys—maybe not three sports all at the same time! Limit your child's access to caffeine—remember it's in chocolate, too. Make sure the bedroom is cool and dark. Set a regular, *relaxing* nighttime routine. Most important, keep TV and computers out of the bedroom, and turn off all screens at least 30 minutes before bedtime. Whether it comes from a bulb or a smartphone, light promotes wakefulness.<sup>1,2</sup>

If your child isn't getting enough sleep, it's also important to rule out a sleep disorder or other medical condition. Snoring can be a sign of sleep apnea in kids, not just in adults.<sup>4</sup> I'd be glad to talk over your concerns or maybe its time to make an appointment with the pediatrician.

*Nothing herein constitutes medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or is a substitute for professional advice. You should always seek the advice of your physician or other medical professional if you have questions or concerns about a medical condition.*

#### **Sources:**

1. CBSNews: "New sleep guidelines for babies, kids and teens." Available at: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/new-sleep-guidelines-for-babies-kids-and-teens/> Accessed: 7-1-17.
2. National Sleep Foundation: "Children and Sleep." Available at: <https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-topics/children-and-sleep> Accessed 7-1-17.
3. HealthDay: "Health Tip: Is Your Child Sleeping Enough?" Available at: [https://medlineplus.gov/news/fullstory\\_164509.html](https://medlineplus.gov/news/fullstory_164509.html) Accessed 7-1-17.
4. National Sleep Foundation: "How Much Sleep Do Babies and Kids Need?" Available at: <https://sleepfoundation.org/excessivesleepiness/content/how-much-sleep-do-babies-and-kids-need> Accessed 7-1-17.