



Healthy Sleep 101

Do sleep patterns really affect learning in young children? Yes! Different studies on children at different ages all agree on this point.

Three-year-old children who nap well are more adaptable. (Adaptability means the ease with which children adjust to new circumstances.) Adaptability is the single most important trait for school success. In fact, the major temperament feature of three-year-olds who do not nap at all is non-adaptability. ***Naps occurring at the right time make the children feel rested.*** Levels of cortisol, a hormone that increases with stress, dramatically fall during a nap, indicating a reduction of stress in the body. Not taking a needed nap means that the body remains stressed.

It comes as a surprise to many parents that healthy **sleep habits do not develop automatically.** In fact, parents can and do help or hinder the development of healthy sleep habits. Of course, children will spontaneously fall asleep when totally exhausted – “crashing” is a biological necessity! But this is unhealthy, because extreme fatigue interferes with normal social interactions and even learning. You should not assume that it is “natural” for children to get peevish, irritable, or cranky at the end of the day. Well-rested children do not behave this way. In addition, **children who are overtired have a harder time settling themselves to sleep.**

When children learn to sleep well, they also learn to maintain optimal wakefulness. **The importance of optimal wakefulness cannot be overemphasized.** If your child does not get all the sleep he needs, he may seem either drowsy or hyperalert. The result: a child with a difficult mood and hard-to-control behaviour, not a child who is ready to learn.

It is NEVER too late to help healthy children learn to sleep better!

HEALTHY SLEEP FOR CHILDREN

Age	Nighttime sleep	Daytime sleep	Average total sleep
2 years	10 to 12 hours	1 to 3 hours (1 nap)	11 to 14 hours
3 years	10 to 12 hours	1 to 3 hours (1 nap)	10 to 13 hours

4-5 years	10 to 13 hours	0 to 2.5 hours (1 or no nap)	10 to 13 hours
6-8 years	9 to 12 hours	none	9 to 12 hours
*Note: The two sets of numbers don't always add up because children who take longer naps tend to sleep fewer hours at night and vice versa.			

Source: http://www.babycenter.com/0_how-much-sleep-does-your-child-need_64915.bc

Tips for Helping Your Child Sleep Better

(choose a combination that you feel is appropriate for your child's age and developmental level)

1. Ensure that you put your child to bed around the same time each night **when he/she is getting sleepy** but not overtired – start bedtime routine when your child is getting sleepy BEFORE they show signs of overtiredness (usually between 7:00-7:30 pm for 2-5 year olds)
2. Establish a **sleep routine** - Choose from this list items that work best and do them at all sleep times
 - Cuddling in a chair or bed
 - Talking in quiet voices – tell a story, chat about the day, say good night to everyone and everything in the room
 - Read aloud a couple of books sitting on a comfy chair/couch or on the bed
 - Play quiet, calm music
 - Snuggle with a stuffed animal or doll
 - Put on nightlight
 - Kiss and hug goodnight, “tuck” in
3. Make a **bedtime schedule** and post it in your child's bedroom (see example)
4. Establish and go over the **Sleep Rules** (see example) You may wish to provide a reward for the morning if your child follows the rules 😊

5. Allow your child to learn the skill of **soothing themselves to sleep** – try not to go back to your child once you have completed your sleep routine. If you do need to go to them, try not to talk, and use gentle non-verbal methods to help settle them such as putting your finger to your lips to signal quiet or making a sleeping gesture by laying your head on prayer hands
6. Put a **digital clock** in the bedroom with a poster that shows the time that they go to bed and the time they are allowed to get out of bed, teach them to tell when the numbers on the clock match the poster

Signs of sleepiness	Signs of overtiredness
Slowing down of activity (#1 sign)	Whining, cries easily
Rubbing eyes	Hyperactivity (spinning top)
Yawning	Demanding, unable to please

SLEEP RULES

At bedtime we...

1. Stay in bed



2. Close our eyes



3. Stay very quiet



4. Go to sleep



BEDTIME SCHEDULE

1. Pajamas on



2. Brush Teeth



3. Read Stories



4. Kiss and Hug



5. Lights out



6. Go to sleep

