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PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN

NOVEMBER 2010

Reprinted by:
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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

SLEEP IS IMPORTANT FOR YOUR CHILD

Do you battle with your child when it is time to go to bed? Would they rather stay up and read a book or watch TV? Sleep is very important for children, just as it is important for you. Their little bodies need sleep so that they can prepare for the next day and give their bodies a break. When children do not get enough sleep they may act differently than when they are well-rested.

You may notice that your child needs more sleep when:

- They seem tired all day long
- They are cranky
- They tell you that they are “being clumsy”
- They seem to be in a growth spurt

Sleep and the brain

Not only do our bodies need sleep, so does our brain. When we are sleeping, the brain:

- Sorts through information
- Stores information
- Solves problems

These are very important for children of all ages, especially those who attend school.

The stages of sleep

Just because our bodies are resting does not mean that everything shuts down. Our brain continues to work when we go to sleep.

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Children need 9 to 10 hours of sleep each night.

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There are 5 stages of sleep:

Stage 1 – Starting to go to sleep

- Brain tells muscles to relax
- Heart beats a little slower
- Body temperature drops a little

Stage 2 – Light sleep

- Body starts to fall asleep
- Can still be awakened easily

Stage 3 – Slow wave sleep

- Blood pressure drops a little
- Harder to wake up in this stage
- Some people sleepwalk or talk in their sleep during this stage

Stage 4 – Deep sleep

- Hard to wake up from this stage
- May sleepwalk or talk in sleep

Stage 5 – REM sleep

- Stands for Rapid Eye Movement
- Dreaming occurs in this stage
- Although muscles are totally relaxed, eyes move around quickly

When you are asleep, your body goes through stages two through five about every 90 minutes.

Tips to help you and your child get to sleep:

- Go to bed at the same time every night. This helps your body know when it is time to go to sleep.
- Follow a routine when you are getting ready for bed. You should make time for quiet and relaxation. This also can help your body know that it is time to go to sleep.
- Limit foods and drinks that have caffeine. Soda and even iced tea have caffeine which can keep you and your child awake.
- Do not watch TV in bed, even if there is one in the room. You should shut it off as you or your child get ready and into bed.

- Do not exercise right before bed, it raises the body temperature and can prevent you from falling asleep.

If your child is having trouble sleeping, talk to him or her and try to find out why. If your child is not sleeping for a prolonged period of time and it is affecting their school work, it may be time to visit a doctor. Remember, it is important that your child get plenty of sleep!



Caffeine in soda can keep you and your child awake. Limit foods and drinks that have caffeine.

SOURCES:

- Kids Health. Aug 2007. "What sleep is and why you need it". The Nemours Foundation. <http://kidshealth.org/>

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