

Sleep In School-Aged Children (6-12 Years)

What to expect

School-aged children need between 10 and 11 hours of sleep per night. Not getting enough sleep is common in this age group, given increasing school obligations (e.g. homework), evening activities, and later bedtimes. Sleep problems are also common in school-aged children, including sleepwalking, sleep terrors, teeth grinding, nighttime fears, snoring, and noisy breathing.

Signs of sleep deprivation in school-aged children can include:

- **Mood.** Sleep deprivation may cause your school-aged child to be moody, irritable, and cranky. In addition, he may have a difficult time regulating his mood, such as by getting frustrated or upset more easily.
- **Behavior.** School-aged children who do not get enough sleep are more likely to have behavior problems, such as noncompliance and hyperactivity.
- **Cognitive ability.** Inadequate sleep may result in problems with attention, memory, decision making, reaction time, and creativity, all which are important in school.

How to help your school-aged child sleep well

- **Develop a regular sleep schedule.** Your child should go to bed and wake up at about the same time each day.
- **Maintain a consistent bedtime routine.** School-aged children continue to benefit from a bedtime routine that is the same every night and includes calm and enjoyable activities. Including one-on-one time with a parent is helpful in maintaining communication with your child and having a clear connection every day.
- **Set up a soothing sleep environment.** Make sure your child's bedroom is comfortable, dark, cool, and quiet. A nightlight is fine; a television is not.
- **Set limits.** If your school-aged child stalls at bedtime, be sure to set clear limits, such as what time lights must be turned off and how many bedtime stories you will read.

- **Turn off televisions, computers, and radios.** Television viewing, computer-game playing, internet use, and other stimulating activities at bedtime will cause sleep problems.
- **Avoid caffeine.** Caffeine can be found in sodas, coffee-based products, iced tea, and many other substances.
- **Contact your child's doctor.** Speak to your child's physician if your child has difficulties falling asleep or staying asleep, snores, experiences unusual awakenings, or has sleep problems that are causing disruption during the day.

From: Mindell JA & Owens JA (2003). A Clinical Guide to Pediatric Sleep: Diagnosis and Management of Sleep Problems. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.