

Sleep Tips from the Good Night Advisory Council: Helpful Hints for Parents and Caregivers

Sleep is as important as nutrition and exercise. Getting a good night's sleep on a regular basis helps children grow, fight illness, maintain a healthy weight, regulate emotions, and solidify learning. Helping your children get good sleep is one of the best things you can do for their health, well-being, and school performance.



Amy R. Wolfson, PhD



Innessa Donskoy, MD

Sleep is controlled by two things: our sleep pressure (the more we do, the more tired we are) and our circadian rhythm (the 24-hour clock in the brain that tells us when it is time to go to sleep and when to wake up). Start your child's day at more or less the same time, seven days a week, with plenty of bright morning sunlight, and plenty of activity. As evening comes, dim the lights and help your child relax without screens so those natural sleep hormones rise and they feel sleepy and ready for bed.

Remember that there are good reasons children need much more sleep than adults. The developing brain is busy making new connections during sleep, transforming prior learning into lasting memory. So make sure your little one is sleeping their way to long-term success!



Candice Alfano, PhD



Cynthia Cummings

A good sleep routine for your children means more time for yourself to rest, rejuvenate and rejoice for a remarkable new day! Help preschool children get ready for bed by turning off screens, relaxing and reading a book together, washing up and brushing teeth, changing into pajamas, and aiming for lights out at 8pm. Then, it will be your turn!

Pajama Program's Good Night Advisory Council members represent a range of disciplines including sleep medicine, public health, psychology, and education. They generously share their knowledge and expertise to help us promote and support a comforting bedtime routine and healthy sleep for all children to help them thrive.



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While it's important to know the recommended hours of sleep by age group, you can also look for some simple clues that will let you know your children are getting the right amount of sleep. When children are able to wake up at the right time in the morning, without needing an alarm or a parent to awaken them, that's a good sign they're getting enough sleep. If your children are able to keep sleeping when given the chance, that's a clue that they need more sleep!



Judith Owens, MD, MPH



Eleanor McGlinchey, PhD

Bad dreams do not always mean that your child got "bad" sleep. Children have difficult and complex emotions just like adults and dreams sometimes reflect those emotions. You can reassure your child that their brains are doing a good job of processing their emotions at night. However, if your child is frequently waking up from nightmares, talk to your doctor about additional ways of helping your child sleep more soundly.

It's easy as a caregiver to let your health fall by the wayside while prioritizing health for your little one. Make your sleep health a priority. It will fuel your ability to care for your little one and thrive in your personal and professional life.



Rebecca Robbins, PhD



Ronald Chervin, MD, MS

Children spend a third or more of their lives asleep. Good, restorative, healthy sleep at night is fundamental to children's mental and physical health during the other two-thirds of their lives, when they are awake. If you have concerns about your child's sleep, bring them to your pediatrician or a sleep medicine physician. Most early life sleep problems – which can be challenging for parents in addition to their children – respond well and quickly to appropriate treatments.

GOOD NIGHTS ARE GOOD DAYS

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