Does Your Child Get Enough Sleep?

Here’s a fact that has parents, teachers and doctors concerned: less than half of all school-age kids get enough sleep most weeknights. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children ages 6 to 12 get between 9 and 12 hours of sleep each night, and that teens get 8 to 10 hours. But a recent study revealed that only 48% of school-age kids get at least 9 hours of sleep per night during the school week.

Quality sleep provides huge benefits. Children who regularly get enough sleep have healthier immune systems and better overall mental health. They have sharper memories and better behavior, which are key to success in school.

Kids who do not get enough sleep are more apt to suffer from physical and emotional problems. A lack of sleep affects mood and concentration, and can lead to health issues like headaches, obesity and depression. Not getting enough quality sleep makes it tougher for kids to cope with life — both at home and at school.

The good news is that parents can ensure their kids get enough sleep by helping them practice what’s known as ‘sleep hygiene.’ Sleep hygiene refers to tried-and-true habits and routines that make it easier for kids to fall asleep and stay asleep. It includes keeping a consistent bedtime and wake time, and ensuring a child’s bedroom is dark, cool, quiet and comfortable. And for younger kids, it helps to have a soothing ritual before bed such as taking a bath, putting on cozy pajamas, brushing teeth and reading a story.

For kids of all ages, getting plenty of exercise and spending time outside during the day can help them get a deep and restful sleep at night. However, in the hour or so before bed, avoid exercise or high-energy activities, including rough-housing. Give your child a chance to unwind and relax.

Also avoid screen time starting an hour before bed, and don’t allow screens in your child’s bedroom at night. Many families find that having their tweens and teens surrender their phones at night really helps their kids get to sleep faster and stay asleep.

For your family’s overall happiness and wellbeing, healthy sleep habits are a worthwhile investment!

Should My Child See a Doctor?
The next time your child has symptoms of a minor illness or injury and you’re trying to decide whether to go to their doctor or if it’s safe to treat them at home, consider checking our child health advice. Bookmark the URL below and find information on everything from abdominal pain to wound infection.

Of course, you know your child best. If you think or feel that your child needs to be seen, call their doctor. And always call 911 if you think it’s a medical emergency.

TO LEARN MORE:
Visit seattlechildrens.org/conditions/symptom-index.
Sledding Safety

Snow sledding is fun for the whole family, as long as it's done safely! Ski areas offer the best sledding thanks to long, thrilling runs that are well-maintained and free of obstacles. For neighborhood sledding, be sure there are no collision hazards like trees, poles, fences and parked cars. And of course, a sledding path must never intersect a street with car traffic. Helmets are a must: a winter-sport helmet is best, but a bike helmet is better than nothing. And always sled feet first, never head first. Be sure everyone has clothing and gear that keep them warm, dry and comfortable. Sledding is an all-ages sport, so be sure you’re there to supervise and take some runs yourself!

TO LEARN MORE:

Cook Up Some Fun with Your Family

The kitchen has always been a place where families connect. And today, the popularity of YouTube videos and TV cooking-competition shows (including some that feature super-talented kids!) have encouraged many families to use meal planning and preparation as a way to enjoy time together. Plus, creating a menu, grocery shopping and cooking all require organized thinking, careful reading, math calculations and following directions. These are all critical skills that benefit kids for the rest of their lives. Preparing a healthy meal also makes children aware of the basic food groups. And it’s fun to see how some kids prefer the science of baking — which requires precise measuring and following directions — versus the art of cooking, which often allows for more improvisation and creativity. So why not invite your child to select a cooking or baking show that you can watch together, or choose a recipe from a kids’ cookbook or an internet recipe site? Try letting them be in charge. You’ll help your child build life skills while you make something delicious and create lasting memories!

TO LEARN MORE:

Understanding and Treating Fevers

A fever is a higher-than-normal body temperature, which is the body’s way of fighting an illness. Normal body temperature is 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit; anything above 100.4 degrees is considered a fever. If you suspect your child has a fever, take their temperature with a thermometer. Keep in mind that in general, you don’t need to give medicine for a fever itself, unless it’s making your child uncomfortable.

When should you see a doctor for a fever?
Do seek medical care if an infant younger than 3 months old has a fever. Regardless of age, a child with a fever higher than 104 degrees should see a doctor, as should any child whose fever lasts more than three days, or any child with a chronic health condition. For more reasons to see a doctor for a fever, follow the URL below.

When is it OK to treat a fever at home?
As long as none of the conditions above or in the article linked below apply and the fever is 104 degrees or lower, keep your child lightly dressed and give them lots of fluids in the form of ice chips, popsicles, water, juice or decaf tea. Don’t wrap them in blankets to warm them up or use ice water or rubbing alcohol to cool them down. If they are uncomfortable, you can give children over 3 months of age acetaminophen (Tylenol). Children over 6 months may take either acetaminophen or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin). Follow the dosage instructions on the label and use the measuring tool that comes with the medicine.

If you are unsure what to do, call your child’s doctor.

TO LEARN MORE:
Quick Tip

It’s not too late to get the flu vaccine this year. Flu season usually lasts until April so there’s still time to get protected.

Mindfulness Meditation

Parents and teachers are discovering the benefits of simple meditation to help ease anxiety and improve behaviors in children. Meditation offers a chance for too-busy brains to ‘unplug’ and relax. This break can help kids function better and think more clearly. Mindfulness meditation does not have to be linked to any belief system; it can be as simple as practicing deep breathing or concentrating on a certain word, sensation or image. What does the medical community think about this? The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages parents to share meditation time with their children. Learn about various types of meditation by following the URL below, or try one of the top-rated meditation apps for kids.

TO LEARN MORE:

Thumbsucking

While it’s natural for some babies to suck their thumbs, children tend to outgrow the habit between the ages of 2 and 4. But sometimes, kids continue thumbsucking to soothe themselves, and they need some help to quit. This requires us as parents to be positive and encouraging. If it’s a nighttime habit, bandaging the thumb or putting a sock on the hand can help. Sometimes, we also need to identify and fix the source of the discomfort that’s triggering the thumbsucking. Since vigorous thumbsucking can cause dental problems, your child’s dentist or doctor can also encourage them to quit — and might prescribe a harmless, bitter-tasting liquid that’s used to coat the thumb.

TO LEARN MORE:

HPV Vaccine Timing

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children ages 11 to 12 get two doses of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, with the doses given 6 to 12 months apart. For teens who missed getting the vaccine sooner, three doses are recommended. Preteens and teens need the vaccine now to prevent certain cancers and conditions when they are adults. The HPV virus is extremely common, and every year in the U.S., HPV-related cancers strike over 30,000 men and women — with 4,000 women dying from cervical cancer annually. Currently, HPV vaccination rates are low in Washington state: less than 52% of males and females between the ages of 13 and 17 have completed the vaccine series.

TO LEARN MORE:
Visit cdc.gov/hpv/hcp/schedules-recommendations.html.
Classes and Events

These classes are popular and often fill up several months in advance, so please register early. Scholarships are available. If you would like to ask about a scholarship, use the contact information for the class you’re interested in to connect with the registrar.

PARENTING CLASSES

Autism 101
This free 90-minute lecture is designed to provide information and support to parents and families of children recently diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. Each class features a different topic.

Classes are usually offered on the third Thursday of the month, 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Seattle Children’s hospital campus in Seattle. These classes are also available via live streaming.

View dates or sign up for live streaming at seattlechildrens.org/autism101. Email Autism101@seattlechildrens.org if you have questions.

Autism 200 Series
Autism 200 is a series of free 90-minute classes for parents and caregivers of children with autism who wish to better understand autism spectrum disorder. This class is offered at the Sand Point Learning Center in Seattle for $20 per person, which includes class materials and lunch.

View dates at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-9878 if you have questions.

Babysafe
Babysafe is a 4-hour class for new and expectant parents and others who care for babies. Topics include infant development, baby safety, injury prevention and care of common injuries for infants from birth through 12 months of age. Babysafe is demonstrated and practiced, but this is not a certification class.

This class is offered in Seattle. The fee is $85 and each registration is good for 2 people from the same family. View dates and locations at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-789-2306 if you have questions.

HeartSaver First Aid, CPR and AED
This video-based class for parents and caregivers covers how to treat bleeding, sprains, broken bones, shock and other first-aid emergencies. Also includes infant, child and adult CPR and AED use. Students receive an American Heart Association HeartSaver Pediatric First Aid, CPR, AED completion card, which is valid for 2 years.

This class is offered at Seattle Children’s hospital campus in Seattle for $75 per person. View dates at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-2304 if you have questions.

Youth Mental Health First Aid
This 8-hour class is for adults who regularly interact with adolescents ages 12 to 18. Youth Mental Health First Aid will improve your knowledge of mental health and substance use problems and will teach you how to connect youth with care when needed.

This class is offered at the Sand Point Learning Center in Seattle for $20 per person, which includes class materials and lunch.

View dates at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-9878 if you have questions.

CHILD, PRETEEN AND TEEN CLASSES

Better Babysitters
For youth, ages 11 to 14. Students learn about infant care, safety, handling emergencies, age-appropriate toys, business tips and parent expectations.

This class is offered in Seattle, Bellevue, Everett and Federal Way. The cost is $50 per person. View dates and locations at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-9878 if you have questions.

CPR and First Aid for Babysitters
For youth, ages 11 to 15. Topics include pediatric CPR, treatment for choking, and first-aid skills. Students receive and an American Heart Association Heartsaver Pediatric First Aid, CPR, AED completion card, which is valid for 2 years.

This class is offered at Seattle Children’s hospital campus in Seattle for $75 per person. View dates at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-2304 if you have questions.

For Boys: The Joys and Challenges of Growing Up
This class is for boys, 10 to 12 years old, and a parent or trusted adult.

For Girls: A Heart-to-Heart Talk on Growing Up
This class is for girls, 10 to 12 years old, and a parent or trusted adult.

Sibshops
Sibshops are lively peer support groups for siblings of kids with special needs. Separate sessions are held for kids 6 to 9 years old and kids 10 to 13 years old.

Sessions take place at Seattle Children’s hospital campus in Seattle at a cost of $25 per session.

View dates online at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-4133.

EVENTS

Free Car Seat Check
WHEN: Saturday, March 28, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
WHERE: Seattle Children’s hospital campus, 4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle
CALL: 206-987-5999

Come learn how to safely secure your child in the car. Child passenger safety experts will check your child in a car seat, booster seat or the seat belt and answer any questions you may have. First come, first served. We do not take reservations.

Free Bike Helmet and Life Jacket Fitting Events
Visit MakeSureTheHelmetFits.org for dates and locations and come get your child properly fit for a new bike helmet or life jacket. Kids must be 1 to 18 and present for fitting. First come, first served. No appointments needed.