



Back to School Sleep Tips for Parents

Most kids set their own sleep schedule during the summer, then school starts and parents are left to battle waking their kids up the first weeks of school. It's important to establish a school sleep routine a week or so before the first day of school. Here are some tips from our Sleep Specialists that might help ease your kids into their new school schedule.

1. Turn off the TV, computer, cell phones and other electronic gadgets at least one hour before bedtime.
2. One week before the first day of school, start waking your child up closer to school start time. Give their bodies some time to adjust to their new wake time. As soon as they wake up, send them outside to get some sunlight. Light exposure can help your child's internal clock adjust to the new schedule.
3. Stay with this routine every day (weekends, too) to help their bodies adjust to the new schedule and to stay on the new schedule.
4. Warm or hot shower or bath prior to bedtime helps their body to fall asleep easier.
5. Establish a nightly routine and stick to it. For example, after dinner finish up homework then have "wind down time" with no TV, video games or computers for about an hour prior to bedtime. Then shower/bath, brush teeth, put on pajamas, and lay down in bed in a darkened/quiet room to fall asleep. (This routine should last no more than 30 minutes.)
6. Keep the bedtime consistent within a 15-minute window. For example, if the desired bedtime is 8:30 pm, then be sure that your child goes to bed between 8:15pm - 8:30pm every night. This takes discipline and planning, but the results are well worth the effort.
7. Most school-age children (6 - 12 yrs old) need 10-11 hrs of sleep per night. Most adolescents (12-18yrs old) need 9 - 9.5 hrs of sleep per night. Some children need more sleep than others - even siblings within the same family. If a child is going to bed at a consistent time but is waking up feeling unrefreshed, then advance the bedtime by 15 minutes. If still unrefreshed in the mornings, then continue to advance it by 15 minutes every few days until the child consistently wake up feeling refreshed.
8. The bed should only be used for sleeping - not for watching TV, doing homework, talking on the phone, playing games, reading, etc - only for sleeping.
9. Avoid caffeine - especially in the afternoon and evening. Caffeine consumption (even in the morning) can interfere with sleep at night.
10. Your child should be able to awaken spontaneously in the morning if adequately rested. The habitual need for an alarm clock in the morning, especially multiple "snooze alarm" hits, strongly suggests insufficient sleep.
11. If your child has plenty of time in bed each night but continues to awaken feeling unrefreshed, he or she may have a sleep disorder. Consider seeking the expert opinion of a Pediatric Sleep Specialist.

*These tips are brought to you by the Board Certified Sleep Specialists
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