

Sleep!

Sleep is essential for good physical and mental health. Now that you're a parent, how much sleep does your child need ?

Babies

Newborns sleep about 16-17 hours per day, but typically in 1-2 hour chunks of time. Infants 4-12 months old need 12-16 hours of sleep per day, including naps. Babies don't develop regular sleep cycles until about 6 months old and after the newborn period will need a little less sleep. It may be normal for your 6 month old to wake in the middle of the night, but hopefully they fall back to sleep after a few minutes. It's also important to remember that different babies may have slightly different sleep needs.

AAP Recommendations for Infant Sleep Safety:

Until their first birthday, babies should sleep on their back for all sleep times.

Use a firm sleep surface for baby.

Room share – keep the baby's sleep area in the same room with you for the first 6-12 months.

Only bring your baby into your bed to feed or comfort.

Bed-sharing is not recommended for any babies.

Keep soft objects, loose bedding, or any objects that risk suffocation out of the babies sleep area.

Swaddling your baby is safe.

Try giving a pacifier at nap time and bedtime.

Breast feed your baby if possible.

Toddlers

For some families, toddler bedtime is the hardest part of the day because they are likely to resist going to sleep as the world is so interesting to them during this highly curious and high energy developmental stage. Children 1-2 years old should sleep 11-14 hours per day (including naps). Children age 3-5 years old need 10-13 hours of sleep per day.

Here are some tips to help your toddler develop good sleep habits:

Bedtime routine – bath, stories, quiet music. Not too much active play.

Be consistent – same time, same routine – this helps them anticipate sleep.

Favorite cuddly “lovie” – Teddy bears, special blankets are all OK.

Try to avoid your child sleeping in your bed – this makes it harder to fall asleep alone.

Give it time – developing a bedtime/sleep routine can be challenging. Try to be patient and understanding. Night lights can help

The AAP program “Brush, Book, Bed” is available on the AAP website.

School Age

Children ages 6-12 years require 9-12 hours per day. This age group will occasionally take a nap on the weekends to catch up with sleep as school and activities become more demanding of their time and energy.

Teenagers

Studies tell us that even though teens seem very grown up in some ways, it doesn't mean they need less sleep. Teenagers still need 8-10 hours of sleep every night to promote good health. "Sleep is critical to maintain focus and alertness, to repair and maintain brain cells, to clear out toxic metabolites and replenish energy sources." Says Dr. Charles A. Czeisler, a professor of sleep medicine at Harvard Medical School.

Teens' sleep cycle begins to shift as they enter adolescence due to hormonal influence that occurs when they enter puberty. Their natural tendency is to go to bed later and resist waking up in the morning. This adolescent "sleep delay" is biological, "It's not just in human teenagers, it's seen in other juvenile mammals too."

Here are some general recommendations to help your teen get enough sleep:

Maintain a regular sleep schedule – go to bed and wake up about the same time every day.

Avoid oversleeping on the weekends – a little extra sleep may help, but getting far off schedule will make weekday sleep more difficult.

"Catnap" – a short 15-20 minute nap in the early afternoon can be beneficial.

Turn off the screens! – Try to turn off screens 30-60 minutes before bedtime and avoid having your teen sleep with their phone.

Avoid caffeine, smoking, alcohol and drugs – all of these are associated with sleep problems.

Call your pediatrician/provider if you have concerns about your teen's sleep.

Sources:

The Science of Adolescent Sleep. Perri Klass MD. New York Times.

American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement, "SIDS and Other sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Updated 2016 Recommendations for a Safe Infant Sleeping Environment."

American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) Guidelines, "Recommended Amount of Sleep for Pediatric Populations."