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What Every Parent's Talking About

parenting OC

*2015 Cutest Kid
Contest Winner,
Aidan of Santa Ana.*

THE BACK-TO-SCHOOL SURVIVAL GUIDE

Backpack, Back Pain
A to Zzzs of Sleep Routines
Unique Style in a Uniform World
The New Class of Healthy Snacks

SPECIAL SECTIONS: PRESCHOOL & EDUCATION, CAMPS & ACTIVITIES, SWIM

The A's to Zzzzzz's of Back to School Sleep Tips

We asked sleep pro Michelle S. Donaghy, founder of MSD Baby Sleep Coach www.msdbabysleepcoach.com, for back to school sleep tips to prepare for those early mornings and earlier bedtimes.

The summer months are for enjoying longer days, family fun and later bedtimes. Now it's time to focus on getting your child's sleep on track so they are well rested for school.

Ideal bedtime

In order to know your child's ideal bedtime, you first need to know how much nighttime sleep they need. Children need more sleep than most parents realize. Sleep deprivation is linked to poor learning and memory.

The National Sleep Foundation recommends the following:

- **Preschoolers** (3-5 years): 10-13 hours
- **School-age children** (6-13): 9-11 hours
- **Teenagers** (14-17): 8-10 hours

The next step is to figure out the time your child has to wake up to be at school on time. Let's assume your 6-year-old needs to get up by 6:00 a.m. to be at school at 8:00 a.m. This means your child must be in bed asleep by 9:00 p.m. to get the minimum requirement of 9 hours. If your 6-year-old shows that she is better rested with 11 hours, she will need to be asleep by 7:00 p.m.

Shift Bedtime and Routines

About 2 weeks before school begins, gradually shift bedtime up earlier by 30 minutes. If your child has been going to bed at 9:30 p.m. and school bedtime needs to be 8:00 p.m., this would be your plan for a 6-13 year old that needs 10 hours of night sleep:

- Nights 1-4: new bedtime 9:00 p.m. and wake up time 7:00 a.m.
- Nights 5-9: 8:30 p.m. and 6:30 a.m.
- Night 10-14: 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

You can also adjust for the earlier bedtime every 1 or 2 days.

There is also the "cold turkey" approach. In this method, start your bedtime routine much earlier and ensure your child is in bed at the "new" bedtime needed for school. You would also wake up your child at the new time needed on the school schedule. This would work for those who don't have time to gradually shift.

With either approach, the plan would be the same for preschoolers, school-aged and teens heading back into a school schedule.

Routines

All children thrive on routines. A bedtime (and morning) routine will likely be different for a preschooler versus a teenager. Regardless, having a flexible routine that includes 3-5 consistent steps before bedtime will help with the transition to bed.

During the back to school transition, it is imperative that your child starts their bedtime routine earlier, so they are asleep at the new bedtime.

Improving Sleep

Turn off all electronics (TV/Cellphone/Tablet) 1 hour before bed. For tweens/teens, I recommend no phones in the bedroom after bedtime.

For preschoolers, stick to a consistent routine and sleep schedule, even on the weekends. For school-aged children/teens, a slightly later bedtime on the weekend is okay.

As with all parenting, consistency and patience is the key to healthy sleep.

POC Picks for Sweet Dreams



Amplifyze TCL Pulse

If waking up your sleepyhead is the most challenging part of the morning, this wireless, radiation-free Bluetooth enabled vibrating device fits under a pillow and can rouse the heaviest of sleepers.

\$39, www.tclpulse.com

www.ParentingOC.com



Stay Asleep Buddy

This cuddly stuffed alarm keeps excited preschoolers and kindergartners sleeping at night with a gentle reminder that it's not quite time to wake yet.

\$29, cloudb.com/stay-asleep-buddies

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