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Parent's Guide to Healthy Sleep

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Every child needs good sleep for healthy development, growth, and learning. As parents, it's your job to help children establish good sleep habits for a lifetime. Children learn how to sleep from their parents, so the habits you establish today can help them maintain healthy sleep not just in childhood, but for the rest of their lives. But while establishing good sleep is important for children, parents may feel a little lost when it comes to actually teaching good sleep habits. This is particularly apparent during the challenges of newborn sleep, toddler sleep resistance, and the never ending struggle in older children between endless activities and adequate rest. In this guide, parents and caregivers can learn more about helping children sleep healthy. The guide shares common sleep challenges for young children, school age children, and teens, along with helpful tips and resources for making the most of sleep at each stage. You can also learn about creating a healthy sleep environment for your child and discover useful resources for learning everything you need to know about why and how we sleep — and how to make sleep better for children.

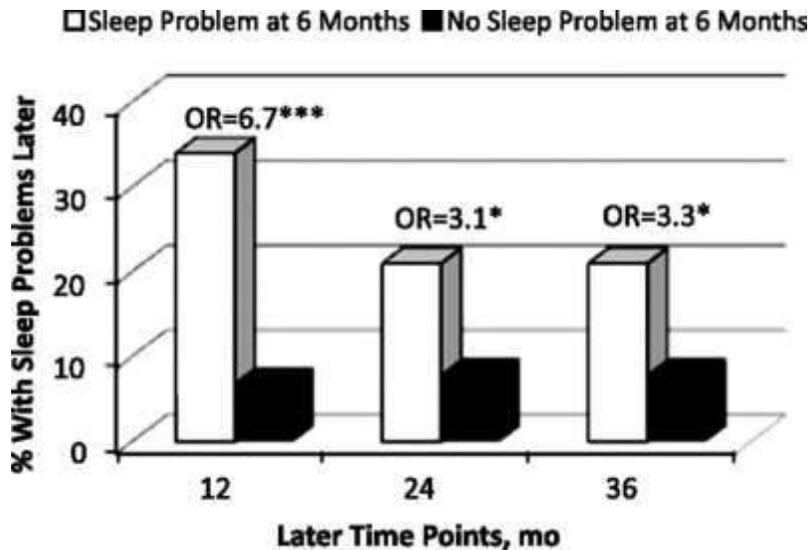
Healthy Sleep for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers



Sleep is often one of the biggest challenges for parents of young children. Babies and toddlers are at an age when they're still developing good sleeping habits — but they also need adequate sleep for health and development.

Babies need sleep to learn and sleep well, says [Marc Weissbluth, MD, author of “Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child.”](#) When babies and children don't get enough consolidated REM sleep, they will have shorter attention spans. Young children without enough sleep will also release more cortisol, a stress hormone that will cause shorter naps and more frequent night wakings, perpetuating sleep problems. Newborns in particular can be challenging, as they have irregular sleep patterns. At this age, babies [have not yet developed circadian rhythms](#). At about six weeks, circadian rhythms begin developing. Most infants have a regular sleep and wake cycle by three to six months.

It's important for parents to establish healthy sleep patterns early in every child's life. [American Academy of Pediatrics research](#) indicates that children who have difficulty sleeping at six months are more likely to have difficulty at later time points, even holding on to poor sleep habits up to and sometimes beyond the age of three.



[Source](#)

Young children sleep many hours of the day. [By age two](#), most children have slept more than they've been awake. Children spend roughly 40 percent of their childhood asleep.

But even though young children sleep much of the day, they may only sleep for [a few hours at a time](#), which is often difficult for parents, especially at night. But with consistent healthy sleep habits, even the youngest children can learn how to sleep well.

Common Sleep Problems for Infants and Toddlers

- **Inability to self-soothe:** Often, babies will fall asleep easily when held by their parents, but wake up right away when set down. Babies may still be learning to self-soothe.
- **Daytime and nighttime reversal:** As young babies have not yet developed circadian rhythms, they may not have night and

day straight yet. Some get them mixed up, sleeping all day and then wanting to stay up at night. This is due to movement while in the womb: daytime activity rocked the baby to sleep all day while leaving the baby awake at night. Limiting daytime naps and making clear distinctions between day and night can help resolve this problem.

- **Sleep regressions:** During certain periods of development, babies may be especially sleep-challenged. As they develop motor skills, grow teeth, or learn new things, they may have more trouble sleeping. But it is temporary. It's important to stick with routines and schedules even during this difficult time so that you can work through it and maintain consistency until regular sleeping patterns return.

- **Nighttime feedings:** Most babies won't sleep through the night until they are six months or older. Very young babies will need multiple night feedings — exhausting, but necessary. One to two night feedings are normal for most babies, but three or more may be excessive. If your baby is waking up several times in the night to feed, talk to your pediatrician. Some babies fall asleep during feedings and don't get enough to fill their bellies. While normally, you should avoid stimulation at night, it may be

necessary to keep baby awake during feedings so that they can get a full belly at each feeding and extend their time in between nighttime feedings.

- **Nighttime stimulation:** While feeding or changing your baby at night, they can get stimulated. This may make them more fully awake and cause difficulties falling back asleep. Parents should take care to avoid fully rousing babies in the night.
- **Separation anxiety:** Young children can develop separation anxiety, often expressed as a need for one or both parents at night. While frustrating and sad, the American Academy of Pediatrics reassures parents that this is a normal stage in development. Children may need reassurance throughout the night. They suggest letting children know when you have to leave, creating a diversion, and using a familiar babysitter when you're going out for the night.
- **Sleep resistance:** Babies may be willing to sleep whenever you encourage them to, but toddlers and preschoolers often have a mind of their own. They're busy exploring new things all day, playing and learning, and may not want the fun to end just because it's bedtime. Toddlers and preschoolers may move slowly through the bedtime routine, make many requests to make bedtime take

longer, or flat out refuse to get in bed and go to sleep. It's important to be firm but gentle with young children who resist regular bedtimes.

Helpful Tips for Baby and Toddler Sleep

- **Develop a reliable schedule:** Babies and children thrive on routine. Maintaining a regular schedule for nap times and bedtime is an important part of healthy sleep in early childhood. With consistent times for sleep, your child is comforted and knows what to expect. And a child's body will naturally begin to prepare for sleep around regular sleep times.

- **Create a sleep friendly environment:** Some babies can and do sleep anywhere, but to establish healthy sleep habits, it's important to develop a friendly sleep environment. Your young child's sleeping environment should be dark, cool, and comfortable. They may also benefit from a comfort item, such as a pacifier for young babies and a security object like a blanket or stuffed animal for children one year and older.

- **Create a consistent bedtime routine:** Establish a consistent bedtime routine early on to help your child settle into bedtime. It doesn't have to be complicated, just the same each

night so that they know it's time to get to bed. Many parents build a routine out of taking a bath, brushing teeth, singing songs, reading books, and sharing a quick snuggle. Toddlers and preschoolers may be able to make straightening up toys a part of their bedtime routine as well.

- **Avoid naps too close to bedtime:** Daytime naps are important and should be treated as seriously as nighttime sleep. After all, naps make up important sleeping time for your baby or toddler. But let children nap too close to bedtime, and they'll be too well rested to fall asleep for the night.
- **Put babies and toddlers to bed when they're sleepy:** It's best to get young children to bed as soon as they start to show signs of sleepiness. They can [indicate their tiredness](#) with crying, rubbing their eyes, or becoming fussy. Babies who are put in bed while still sleepy will learn how to get themselves to sleep better than those placed in bed already asleep.
- **Keep babies calm and quiet when feeding or changing at night:** The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) recommends avoiding too much stimulation while feeding or changing babies at night. Keep lights and voices low and avoid engaging your baby's attention.

- **Place babies on their backs to sleep:** Babies up to one year of age, but especially between one and four months, are at risk of [Sudden Infant Death Syndrome \(SIDS\)](#). Place your baby on his or her back on a firm sleep surface free of soft objects and loose bedding to reduce the risk.

- **Keep a tracking log if you're concerned:** If you feel your baby or toddler isn't sleeping as well as their peers, consider logging their sleep. It's tough to remember exactly what happened in the fuzzy early hours of the morning, but a log can help you spot patterns and figure out exactly how much your baby — and you — are sleeping. You may also be able to identify ideal times to put your baby down for the night or even see that you really weren't up for three hours with your baby even though it certainly felt like it at the time.

- **Play during the day:** The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) recommends talking and playing with your baby during the day. This will lengthen the time they are awake during the day and help encourage sleeping longer at night. Be careful to avoid active play just before bedtime.

- **Don't immediately respond to cries:** Teach children to self-soothe by giving them a few minutes before responding to

fussing. The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) says you should wait to see if they will fall asleep on their own before checking in.

- **Keep consistent sleep habits with all caregivers:** While your child is cared for by babysitters, family members, and other caregivers, make sure they're still consistently following established sleep times and routines so they don't get off track.
- **Treat sleep problems:** If you suspect your child has a serious sleep problem that interferes with their ability to get adequate sleep or function well during the day, don't hesitate to talk to your pediatrician and get help from a sleep specialist if necessary.
- **Be patient:** Young children are still learning how to sleep well, so it's important for parents to exercise patience and understanding as they develop good sleep habits. Be patient and supportive and get help if you're experiencing challenges you can't handle yourself.

[Additional Resources](#)

- [HealthyChildren.org: Getting Your Baby to Sleep](#): The American Academy of Pediatrics offers helpful suggestions for getting babies, toddlers, and preschoolers to sleep.

- [**Sleep Foundation: Tips for Helping the New Baby Sleep Like a Baby**](#): The Sleep Foundation shares tips for establishing a healthy sleep routine for new babies.
- [**American Sleep Association: 8 Tips to Help Your Baby Sleep Through the Night**](#): The American Sleep Association recommends consistency and healthy sleep associations when helping babies learn how to sleep through the night.
- [**Cleveland Clinic: Pediatric Sleep Disorders**](#): Consult this guide if you're concerned about sleep disorders in your young child. The guide also offers help for developing healthy sleep habits in children.
- [**HealthyChildren.org: Sleep**](#): Use this reference to find helpful articles on child sleep from the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- [**HealthyChildren.org: A Parent's Guide to Safe Sleep**](#): Take steps to reduce your baby's risk of death from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome with this guide.
- [**HealthyChildren.org: Toddler Bedtime Trouble: Tips for Parents**](#): Parents can help toddlers establish good sleep habits with these useful tips.

- [HealthyChildren.org: The 4 Bs of Bedtime](#): Create soothing comfort for babies and young children with these additions to your bedtime routine.
- [KidsHealth: Sleep and Your 1 to 2 Year Old](#): Naps, bedtimes, and even sleep environments can change for toddlers. This guide from KidsHealth will help you and your young child make good sleep choices.
- [Sleep Foundation: Toddlers and Napping: How Much is Normal?](#): Toddlers may take one nap or two naps and vary how long they sleep during their naps. This guide helps parents determine how much toddlers should be sleeping during the day.
- [Mayo Clinic: Child Sleep: Put Preschool Bedtime Problems to Rest](#): Resolve preschool sleep problems with the help of this guide from the Mayo Clinic.

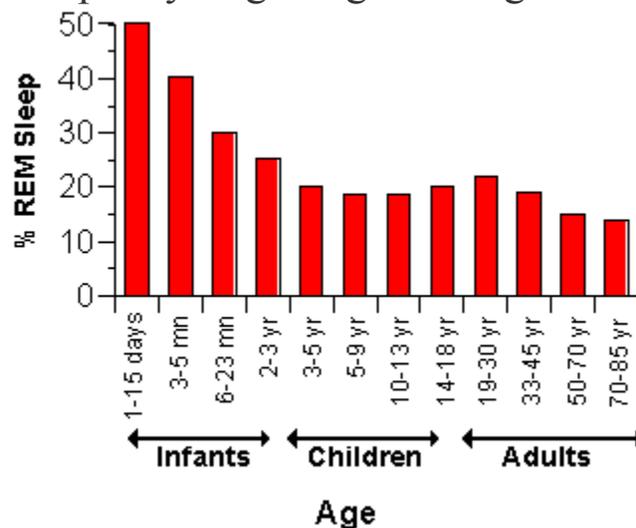
Healthy Sleep for School Age Children



Just like babies and toddlers, school age children need plenty of sleep to learn and perform their best. And sleep problems don't stop once your children are out of the preschool stage. Unfortunately, as school

obligations, evening activities, and later bedtimes are introduced, children in this age group can often experience significant sleep challenges.

At this age, [REM sleep has significantly changed from that of a newborn or preschooler](#). School age children are spending far less time in the REM stage of sleep. And that means they need to make the most of the deep sleep they're getting each night.



[Source](#)

The school year in particular can make sleeping difficult for children. While children often have more time to sleep during school holidays, they fall back into a strict sleep schedule when school is in session. Researcher and former school psychology director [Joseph A.](#)

[Buckhalt, PhD](#) says that transitions can be particularly difficult at the start of a school year.

“When school is out for holidays and summers, children usually adopt a less strict schedule and their wake times are often much later, resulting in more sleep time,” says Buckhalt. “Transitions back to school pose some challenges on Mondays, but may be particularly difficult at the start of a new school year.”

This is unfortunate, as Buckhalt says children are more adversely affected by insufficient sleep. Not getting enough sleep can cause issues with alertness, learning, and memory in school age children. But with enough sleep, children can better retain and organize the new information they learn each day.

[Education experts](#) say a lack of sleep is a national epidemic for children today. But they also say that adequate sleep can be a secret weapon for school success.

Of course, good sleep for school age children has benefits beyond learning. Establishing healthy sleep habits in your child’s formative years can help them maintain good sleep through their teen years and for the rest of their lifetime.

Common Sleep Problems for School Age Children

- **Nighttime anxiety:** School age children don't have jobs or mortgages to worry about, but they do have anxieties that can keep them up at night. They may be scared about burglars, fires, or even monsters in the closet. Or they may have trouble relaxing and clearing daytime troubles such as bullies, schoolwork, and relationship struggles out of their minds before falling asleep. Children may complain of a stomachache, ask for extra hugs, cry when you leave, or refuse to sleep alone. Talk out their fears with them. Encourage older children to write their anxieties out into a journal so that they don't have to take them to bed. And items like favorite stuffed animals or even a body pillow can help children feel comforted so they can drift off to sleep.
- **Lack of daytime exercise:** It's not uncommon for school age children to spend most of their day sitting at school and the rest on the couch watching TV or at a computer. This results in a lack of activity that can make it more difficult for children to fall asleep. "Exercise produces brain chemicals that promote sleep and relaxation," says University of Miami associate professor of clinical pediatrics [Shahriar Shahzeidi, MD](#). Inactivity throughout

the day means children may struggle to fall asleep at night. But playing sports, playing outside, and limiting screen time can add more activity to your child's day and improve nighttime sleep.

- **Sleepwalking:** Sleepwalking is incredibly common among school age children. Children's Hospital at Montefiore pediatric neurologist [Karen Ballaban-Gil](#) says between 20 to 40 percent of school age children sleepwalk. It is the result of an incomplete sleep stage transition. The body is able to move around, but the brain remains asleep. It usually happens in the first few hours after bedtime. Most children outgrow the condition without treatment, but it's important to be prepared. Keep floors cleared, lock bedroom windows, and install locks on front and back doors. Gently guide sleepwalking children back to bed.

- **Snoring and sleep apnea:** Snoring and sleep apnea aren't just sleep problems for adults. A [quarter of elementary school kids](#) have mild apnea. Children with apnea will stop breathing several times during the night, waking to continue breathing. This can keep them from getting important deep sleep. Sleep apnea in children can be triggered by chronic sinus infections, obesity, and the most likely cause: oversized tonsils or adenoids. Children with suspected sleep apnea should be diagnosed in a sleep lab. Most

often, the condition is treated by removing tonsils and adenoids. If obesity or sinus infections are the culprit, those conditions are treated to alleviate or eliminate apnea.

- **Nightmares:** Children of all ages have nightmares, but school age children are particularly susceptible. As they learn more about real life dangers and anxieties, children have more fuel for nightmares. Children with nightmares may wake up crying or scared, interfering with a good night's sleep — and maybe even haunting them throughout the day as they remember the bad dream. Comfort your child after a nightmare, talk about it if they'd like to do so, and patiently remind them that it is only a dream. Minimizing stress and practicing a soothing bedtime routine can help ward off nightmares.

- **Too much screen time:** School age children often spend a lot of time looking at screens throughout the day. In the computer lab at school, on their phones while texting, at home playing video games, watching TV, or working at a computer. While some screen time is beneficial and essential for learning, too much can interfere with healthy sleep, especially when it occurs before bed. The bright artificial light of screens can confuse your child's circadian rhythm and convince their brain that it's still daytime —

awake time — when in fact they may just be a few minutes away from bedtime. Encourage physical activity away from screens, limit screen time at home, and turn off all screens at least an hour before bedtime.

Helpful Sleep Tips for School Age Children

- **Maintain a healthy sleep schedule:** As with young children, a consistent sleep schedule is important for healthy sleep habits in school age children. Keeping a regular schedule for sleeping will help children get to sleep on time and get more restful sleep as their bodies are used to going to sleep at the same time. This can also cut down on bedtime resistance, as children know what to expect consistently every night.
- **Keep up with bedtime routines:** Your school age bedtime routine may not be as involved as it was when your child was younger, but a routine is still important. Straightening up, bathing, brushing teeth, using the bathroom, and reading before bed can help children settle down. It's also a good idea to make putting phones and devices away well before bedtime a part of your nightly routine.

- **Give your child a healthy sleep environment:** Your child's bedroom should be quiet, dark, and cool. They need comfortable bedding and little to no distractions from sleep. That means no TV in their room.
- **Limit caffeine consumption:** Some school age children drink coffee, but even among those who don't, caffeine is everywhere. Keep an eye on caffeine consumption not just in coffee but in sodas, chocolate, and more. Excess caffeine consumption should be avoided and no caffeine should be consumed by the late afternoon.
- **Avoid scary TV and movies:** Older children may be able to handle scary shows any time of day, but in younger children, scary TV and movies can lead to nightmares and trouble falling asleep. Use good judgement when allowing children to watch TV at night and consider age appropriate shows and subjects.
- **Limit cell phones and screen time:** The artificial light from cell phones and other screens can confuse your child's circadian rhythm and make it difficult to get to sleep. Establish a rule that all screens are turned off at least an hour before bed.
- **Avoid hunger — and heavy meals — before bed:** A heavy meal right before bed can make children uncomfortable and

make it difficult to fall asleep. But going to bed hungry can cause sleep problems as well. Before sending your child off to bed, ask them if they'd like a small, healthy snack.

- **Ease your child back into a healthy sleep schedule before school starts:** About two weeks before kids return to school, start working on a school year sleep schedule, slowly moving bedtimes and wake times up while still allowing them enough sleep for their age group.
- **Consider how your family's schedule may cut down on restful sleep time:** If your family is often out at sporting events until well after dinner time or a parent works a late shift while children stay up to greet them when they come home, you may have challenges to solve. Take a hard look at your family's daily routine to identify trouble spots that may be making your child's sleep more difficult.
- **Model healthy sleep habits:** Children often learn by example, especially at the school age level when they notice your actions and consequences. Be careful to get a good night's sleep yourself so that children can follow your lead.
- **Talk to your child's doctor if you're concerned:** If your child has trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, snores regularly,

or has sleep problems that interfere with normal daytime function, don't hesitate to get help from your child's doctor.

Additional Resources

- [**Nationwide Children's: Sleep in School Aged Children \(6-12 Years\)**](#): Find out from Nationwide Children's Hospital what to expect from school age child sleep and how you can help your child sleep well.
- [**Sleep Foundation: Back to School Sleep Tips**](#): Is your child rested and ready for back to school season? The National Sleep Foundation offers helpful back to school sleep tips to get them on track.
- [**Sleep Foundation: Light, Sleep & School Aged Children: A Complex Relationship**](#): The National Sleep Foundation explains why light impacts circadian rhythms and alertness in school aged children.
- [**Akron Children's Hospital: 9 Ways to Help Your School Age Child Sleep Better**](#): Follow these recommendations to make sleep easier and more restful for your school age child.
- [**Sleep Foundation: When Kids Should Go to Bed — Based On Age**](#): Not sure when you should put your school age

child to bed? This resource will help you figure out the perfect timing.

- [**Children's National: How Oversleeping and Lack of Sleep Affect Your Child's Mood**](#): Oversleeping, a lack of sleep, and sleep problems in general can have a negative effect on mood in children of school age. Learn how you can help with this resource.
- [**Harvard University: Healthy Activity, Screen Time, and Sleep in the Early Years**](#): Harvard explains the connection between activity and sleep and offers tips for encouraging daily physical activity for children.
- [**American Psychological Association: School Year Means Sleep Challenges for Kids of All Ages**](#): Learn about some of the sleep challenges school age children face when the school year is in session in this resource from the American Psychological Association.
- [**GreatSchools.org: The Secret Weapon for School Success**](#): In this resource, you'll learn why good sleep is a secret weapon for good academic achievement.
- [**Kennedy Krieger Institute: Another Restless Night or Something More? Five Signs of Sleep Disorders in School Age**](#)

Children with Special Needs: Identify signs of sleep problems in school age children with special needs with the help of this resource.

Healthy Sleep for Teenagers



Teens are young adults, but they don't yet sleep like adults. Epidemiologic studies suggest that most function best with at least nine hours of nightly sleep—yet few sleep that much. Nearly [90](#)

[percent](#) of high school students don't get enough sleep on school nights. This is unfortunate, as teens often have intense physical and mental demands that require adequate sleep. There are serious consequences for teens who don't sleep enough: poor grades, moodiness, obesity, drowsy driving, even an increased risk for anxiety, depression, and suicide.

Founder of the Stanford Sleep Disorders Clinic [William Dement MD, PhD](#) warns that high school is a danger spot for sleep deprivation — and a huge problem. Without enough sleep, says Dement, teens don't perform at optimal levels in school, sports, driving, or even in health. Teens are often not getting enough sleep due to factors beyond their control. Boggled down with homework, home and work responsibilities, and active social lives, teens may not have time to get to bed on time. And some teens suffer from [delayed sleep phase syndrome](#), which makes it difficult to fall asleep before late night hours hit. But [85 percent of high schools](#) start at 8:30 a.m. or earlier, forcing teens to get up early during the week and often interrupting natural circadian rhythms.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) says that many middle and high schools start far too early in the morning — and there are serious consequences involved in too little sleep for teens.

Common Sleep Problems for Teenagers

- **Demands on time:** For many teens, the biggest problem with sleep is there just isn't enough time to get more than nine hours of sleep every night. They're balancing demands on their time including early school hours, heavy homework loads, extracurricular activities, jobs, home responsibilities, and more. Parents of teens who aren't getting enough sleep should carefully examine schedules along with their teen to determine if any changes can be made, including dropping unnecessary activities.
- **Circadian rhythm shift:** When teens hit puberty, their circadian rhythm shifts to a later bedtime. Teens may be sleepy around 8:00 or 9:00 p.m. before puberty, but after puberty, they aren't sleepy until 10:00 or 11:00 p.m. This sleep phase delay can make teens feel like they're suffering from insomnia and make it difficult to get enough sleep before it's time to wake up for school.
- **Not enough daytime activity:** Though teens are usually incredibly busy during the day, they're often not getting enough exercise. Exercise is important for health and good sleep, so missing out means teens may not be ready to fall asleep when they should. Teens should participate in sports or commit to exercising

independently to make sure they get enough physical activity during the day.

- **Too much screen time:** Teens often spend a lot of time on screens during the day and into the night. They're working on computers at school, texting with friends, watching TV, and doing homework on laptops at home. They may even take mobile devices to bed. But all of this screen time can interfere with their already confused circadian rhythms, making it difficult to fall asleep on time. Teens should pay attention to how much screen time they have during the day and take care to stop using screens an hour before bed — never taking devices into bed with them.

Helpful Sleep Tips for Teenagers

- **Maintain calm time at home before bed:** It can be tough to wind down from a busy day, but it's important for teens to do so. Making the hours (or hour) before bed a calm time can help teens get into a more sleepy mindset and make it easier to fall asleep comfortably.
- **Regular sleep time:** Sleep thrives on routine, so teens should try to keep a regular sleep time, even on the weekends.

Teens should aim to fall asleep within the same hour each night to train themselves to become sleepy at bedtime.

- **Keep few evening activities during the week:** Teens can quickly become overwhelmed with weeknight activities that keep them wired and up well past their bedtime — even cutting into homework time so they have no choice but to stay up late to finish it. Carefully consider evening activities including sports, extracurricular activities, work, and home responsibilities, and how they have an effect on everyday sleep habits.

- **Make teen bedrooms calm and comfortable:** Like younger children as well as adults, teens need bedrooms that are calm, cool, dark, and comfortable. Make sure your teen has a good mattress, soft bedding, and a healthy sleep environment free of distractions.

- **Maintain a regular exercise routine:** Teens should make sure they're getting enough physical activity every day. Experts recommend at least 30 minutes of activity every day for good sleep and overall good health.

- **Keep lights low at night:** Before bed, teens should keep lights low in order to signal to their brain that it's just about time to

go to sleep. And in the morning, they should let bright lights in to signal the start of the day and alert time.

- **Limit caffeine use:** Too much caffeine can leave teens wired, especially in the evenings. Encourage teens to avoid consuming too much caffeine during the day and stop caffeine consumption after 4:00 p.m. This includes sodas and chocolate.
- **Consider the effect of medication on sleep cycles:** Some medications such as Ritalin or Adderall can cause insomnia. Talk with your doctor about using these medications and the best time for you to take them.
- **Encourage short nap times:** Nap times can help sleep deprived teens feel refreshed and supplement nighttime sleep. The key is to make sure that naps are kept short, typically under an hour, to avoid nighttime sleep interference.
- **Discourage smoking, alcohol, and drugs:** For general health, teens should avoid smoking, alcohol, and drug use. But it is especially important that teens avoid these substances for their sleep health. They can interfere with a teen's ability to fall asleep, stay asleep, or get restful sleep at night.
- **Reduce anxiety:** Teens often suffer from serious stress and anxiety, especially as they navigate increasingly complicated

personal relationships and prepare to graduate and even go to college. For many teens, stress and anxiety aren't going away — and they can interfere with healthy sleep. Teens can reduce the negative effects of stress and anxiety by practicing stress relieving exercises including meditation, yoga, and prayer.

- **Catch up on sleep over the weekend — within reason:**

While teens should try to maintain a regular sleep schedule every day of the week, weekends do present an opportunity to catch up on a few hours of sleep missed over the course of the week. Teens can safely add a couple extra hours of sleep on weekend mornings — but be careful not to overdo it. Sleeping in too late all weekend can make it difficult to wake up on Monday morning.

[Additional Resources](#)

- [Centers for Disease Control: Teen Sleep Habits](#): The Centers for Disease Control discusses the risk factors associated with insufficient teen sleep as well as important recommended sleep health tips.

- [Stanford Medicine: Among Teens, Sleep Deprivation and Epidemic](#): Stanford Medicine's resource shares an overview of the epidemic of teen sleep deprivation and its consequences

including poor grades, mental health problems, and drowsy driving.

- [**UCLA Sleep Disorders Center: Sleep and Teens:**](#)

UCLA's Sleep Disorders Center explains some of the biggest factors keeping teens from getting enough sleep every night.

- [**Sleep Foundation: Teens and Sleep:**](#) The National Sleep Foundation shares why sleep is so important for teens, how much sleep teens need, and more in this resource.

- [**WebMD: Common Sleep Disorders in Teens:**](#) Sleep disorders affect teens, just like they do every age group from infants to adults and the elderly. In this resource, you can learn about some of the most common sleep disorders teens face.

- [**Child Mind Institute: What Happens When Teenagers Don't Get Enough Sleep:**](#) Child Mind Institute explains what happens when teens don't sleep enough, sharing consequences including teen angst, risky behavior, and increased risk of injuries.

- [**Nationwide Children's: Sleep in Adolescents \(13-18 Years\):**](#) Read this resource from Nationwide Children's to learn about what to expect from teen sleep and how you can help your teen get enough sleep.

- [**KidsHealth: Sleep Problems in Teens**](#): Study this resource to find out about some of the most common sleep problems in teens, including insomnia, sleep apnea, reflux, nightmares, and narcolepsy.
- [**American Academy of Pediatrics: Insufficient Sleep in Adolescents and Young Adults: An Update on Causes and Consequences**](#): The American Academy of Pediatrics explains what happens when teens don't get enough sleep, highlighting problems with academic success, health, and safety.
- [**American Academy of Pediatrics: Let them Sleep: AAP Recommends Delaying Start Times of Middle and High Schools to Combat Teen Sleep Deprivation**](#): Read this resource to learn why the American Academy of Pediatrics encourages later start times for secondary school students.
- [**PLoS One: Identifying Adolescent Sleep Problems**](#): How can parents know if their teen has a serious sleep problem? This scholarly article examines factors in self identifying sleep problems in teens.

Most U.S. middle and high schools start the school day too early



5 out of **6** U.S. middle and high schools start the school day before **8:30 AM**

The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that middle and high schools should aim to start no earlier than 8:30 AM to enable students to get adequate sleep.



Teens need at least **8** hours of sleep per night.



Younger students need at least **9** hours.



2 out of **3** U.S. high school students sleep less than **8 hours** on school nights

Adolescents who do not get enough sleep are more likely to



be overweight



not get enough physical activity



suffer from depressive symptoms



engage in unhealthy risk behaviors such as drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco, and using illicit drugs



perform poorly in school

For more information: www.cdc.gov

Source

Healthy Sleep Environments for Children: Mattresses and More



Children of all ages need a healthy, comfortable place to sleep. Parents can help children establish a good sleep environment with an appropriate mattress, bedding, pillows, lighting, and more.

Mattresses for Children

Mattresses are the foundation of healthy sleep for children. Every child needs a good mattress, but their mattress needs will change at different ages and stages.

Crib Mattresses

Crib mattresses are designed specifically for infant and toddler use. They are smaller than other mattresses to fit crib and toddler beds. Crib mattresses are also often firmer, giving babies a safe sleep surface. Crib mattresses have little variety in materials and types, though there are some options.

Materials and Types of Crib Mattresses

- **Innerspring crib mattresses:** Traditionally, crib mattresses are innerspring. These mattresses are supported by coils and are wrapped in fabric, foam, and other padding materials.
- **Foam crib mattresses:** Foam mattresses are less popular than innerspring crib mattresses, but still a good choice. They are often lightweight and may be inexpensive. They are typically used in bassinets rather than cribs. When choosing a foam crib or bassinet mattress, it's important to look for firmness and resiliency. A foam mattress that is too soft increases your baby's risk of death from SIDS or suffocation.
- **Organic crib mattresses:** Organic crib mattresses are made out of organic materials. They can be innerspring or foam and are free of gases and pesticides.

Which Type of Crib Mattress is Best for Your Child?

All crib mattresses are made to be appropriate and safe for infant and toddler use, so there's really no wrong choice. But parents may have a particular preference or need special sizing or features that require a specific model or type of mattress.

Both innerspring and foam mattresses are comfortable and safe for babies. Organic innerspring or foam mattresses are a good choice for parents who are concerned with gases and materials that may be harmful to babies.

Other features to look for are appropriate firmness, venting to allow odors and moisture to escape, and water resistant covering. Parents should also take care to ensure accurate sizing. While cribs and crib mattress sizing is standard, it's important to double check that the mattress you purchase fits snugly without any space in between the frame and mattress where a baby could suffocate. Due to hygiene and safety standard concerns, used crib mattresses are not a good choice. And any mattress you purchase should have certification seals from the American Society for Testing and Materials as well as the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Crib Mattress Lifespan

Crib mattresses are only used for a short while for each child, but many families reuse their mattresses for each child. Crib mattresses last about as long as regular mattresses and should be replaced every

eight years. Of course, if they are recalled or show signs of wear or abuse, they should be replaced sooner. Punctures in waterproof coverings, mold, and sagging are signs it's time to get a new crib mattress.

Maintaining Crib Mattresses

Crib mattresses should be kept clean. Using a waterproof cover helps if your mattress doesn't already have waterproof housing. You can also spot clean a crib mattress using mild soap and a damp cloth. Do not use cleaners, as they can interfere with good sleep and can also damage your crib mattress.

Choosing Child Mattresses

Once children are out of the crib mattress stage, you'll need to move on to a larger size bed. There are significantly more sizes, materials, and options for child mattresses than crib mattresses.

The Best Size Mattress for Children

For many families, a twin or twin XL is the best choice for children. This is especially true in small bedrooms. But some families choose a full size bed or larger that older children can keep for several years and grow into.

Types of Mattresses for Children

Mattresses for children are available in all of the different options available to adults. This includes innerspring, memory foam, hybrid, latex, and more. The two most popular types of mattresses for children are innerspring and memory foam.

- **Innerspring mattresses:** The most popular mattress choice for children, innerspring mattresses are supported by coils. They come in a variety of firmness and comfort options. Innerspring mattresses are a good choice for back, side, and stomach sleepers. Parents should place innerspring mattresses on top of traditional box springs. Innerspring mattresses typically cost between \$100 and \$500.
- **Memory foam mattresses:** Also a popular choice for children, memory foam mattresses are made up of foam that will

mold to your child's body. Memory foam mattresses are known for their support and conformability. They are recommended for back and side sleepers. Memory foam mattresses can be used on platform and adjustable beds. Typically, memory foam mattresses cost about \$100 to \$700.

Pillows for Children

- **Foam pillows:** Foam and memory foam pillows adjust to the shape of your child's head for good neck support.
- **Latex pillows:** Firm and resistant to dust mites and mold, latex pillows are a good choice for children with allergies.
- **Feather pillows:** The softest and most comfortable pillow for many, down and feather pillows are a popular choice. But be careful, as some children are allergic.
- **Wool and cotton pillows:** Wool and cotton pillows are typically firm, hypoallergenic, and resistant to mold and dust mites.

Choosing the Right Pillow for Children

Parents have plenty of choice in pillows for children. Latex pillows as well as wool and cotton pillows are recommended for children who

suffer from allergies. Firm pillows such as latex material pillows are recommended for side sleepers. Stomach and back sleepers should use a soft, thin pillow such as down and feather pillows. Children who need better neck support should use memory foam pillows.

Bedding for Children

- **Ask your child to help you:** Give your child the opportunity to help you pick out their bedding. They can tell you about their style and comfort preferences so that you choose bedding they'll be happy with.
- **Buy quality sheets:** Many children's sheet sets are low quality, especially when choosing character sets. But a high thread count sheet set will be more comfortable and durable over the long run.
- **Don't forget a waterproof mattress:** Young children may have accidents at night, soiling their mattress if it's not properly protected. Always use a waterproof mattress to make sure the mattress stays clean even during nighttime accidents.
- **Consider your climate and child's comfort when picking a comforter:** Children in cold climates may need

extremely warm down and feather blankets, while those in warm states will do best with cotton or synthetic covers. Cotton is a good choice for children who sweat at night, as it is breathable and absorbs moisture.

Bedtime Lights for Children

- **Use nightlights sparingly:** While a nightlight can help children feel more comfortable and safe in the dark, they can result in poor sleep quality as children are exposed to light during sleeping hours. A good alternative to a nightlight is a flashlight within easy reach of your child's bed. They can use it to get out of bed in the night or turn it on when they're scared. Nightlights that turn off with a timer are also a good choice.
- **Keep your child's bedroom dark:** Darkness signals to your child's brain that it's time to sleep, so you should always keep it as dark as possible at night. Use heavy curtains to block out light at night, especially if you live near a street light or other evening light.

[Additional Resources for Child Sleep Environments](#)

- [Sleep Foundation: Three Things You Need to Know About Your Child's Sleep Environment](#)
- [Sleep Foundation: Design a Sleep Friendly Bedroom for Your Child](#)
- [KidsHealth: Household Safety Checklist: Child's Room](#)
- [Boston Children's Hospital: 6 Ways Your Child's Bedroom May be Sabotaging Her Sleep](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics: A Parent's Guide to Safe Sleep](#)

Helping Your Child Understand the Importance of Sleep



Parents know how important sleep is for children, but children themselves may not understand. Young children in particular often don't grasp the connection between feeling energetic and healthy and

getting enough sleep. But with your help, you can educate children of all ages on how important it is to sleep well each and every night.

- [KidsHealth: Why Do I Need Sleep?](#)
- [Sleep for Kids: Why We Sleep](#)
- [Sleep Foundation: What Happens When You Sleep?](#)
- [Harvard University: Why Do We Sleep, Anyway?](#)
- [Sleep Foundation: Sleep and the Brain: What Happens?](#)
- [Massachusetts Institute of Technology: What Happens in](#)

[Your Brain During the Two Critical Stages of Sleep](#)

- [Sleep Foundation: In Your Dreams](#)
- [Wonderopolis: Why Do We Dream?](#)
- [Sleep Foundation: How Much Sleep Do We Really Need?](#)
- [Sleep Foundation: What Happens When My Child or Teen](#)

[Doesn't Get Enough Sleep?](#)

Ultimate Sleep Chart for Children

Use this chart to learn more about child sleep at every age. You'll see how much sleep children need based on their age as well as helpful sleep tips.

Show entries
 Search:

→	NEWBORN-2 MONTHS	2-4 MONTHS	4-6 MONTHS	6-9 MONTHS	9-12 MONTHS
TOTAL SLEEP	16-18 HOURS	14-16 HOURS	14-15 HOURS	14 HOURS	14 HOURS
Nighttime sleep	8-9 hours	9-10 hours	10 hours	10-11 hours	10-12 hours
Naptime sleep	7-9 hours	4-5 hours	4-5 hours	3-4 hours	2-3 hours
Sleep Help/Tips	-To prevent SIDS, babies should always be put to sleep on their backs.	-Give your baby a few minutes to attempt self soothing before you respond to their cries.	-Now is the time to begin transitioning your baby out of swaddling. Consider a sleep sack if your baby needs warmth at night.	-Babies at this age may be able to climb out of their crib, so get their mattress down to the lowest available position.	-Take care to avoid bright lights at night, which can confuse your baby's developing circadian rhythm.
	-Using swaddling and white noise can help babies sleep.	-Put babies down for a nap or bedtime as soon as they show signs of sleepiness.	-Your baby may be ready to sleep through the night at this age.	-Provide your baby with relaxing time before bed to avoid overstimulation.	-Babies at this age may experience separation anxiety, so be ready to spend extra time reassuring your baby that you'll always come back. Try playing peek a boo with them during the day.

→	NEWBORN-2 MONTHS	2-4 MONTHS	4-6 MONTHS	6-9 MONTHS	9-12 MONTHS
	-Avoid stimulating your baby at night by talking in soothing tones and avoiding bright lights.	-Establish a soothing bedtime routine with regular habits like taking a bath, reading a book, or singing lullabies.	-Try feeding your baby while they're still sleeping to extend nighttime sleep hours.	-Remember to lay your baby down while awake but drowsy, not fully asleep.	-Cereal in your baby's bottle can cause indigestion and is typically not necessary.
	-Newborns will often sleep for two to four hours at a time.	-Blankets and soft toys in a baby's crib pose a risk for SIDS and suffocation.			
	-Don't change nighttime diapers unless you have to. Unless there's poop or a leak, it's not necessary to risk waking your baby up.				

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Additional Resources for Parents

Sleep Training

- [**Sleep Foundation: Everything You Need to Know**](#)

[**About Sleep Training**](#): The National Sleep Foundation's resource on baby sleep training has an overview of sleep training strategies, explains when babies may be ready to sleep train, and how you can set your baby up for sleep success no matter what option you choose.

- [**Child Mind Institute**](#): Learn about a variety of sleep training strategies available to parents from the Child Mind Institute's resource.

- [**American Academy of Pediatrics: Infant Sleep Training is Effective and Safe, Study Finds**](#): The American Academy of Pediatrics reassures parents that sleep training is effective, safe, and can improve the mental health and sleep of children as well as mothers.

- [**American Sleep Association: To Sleep Train or Not to Sleep Train, That is the \(Ongoing\) Question**](#): Is sleep training for you? Consider your options with this resource from the American Sleep Association.

[**Sleep Aids for Children**](#)

- [**University of Michigan Health System: Sleep Problems:**](#)

The University of Michigan recommends behavioral treatments for children with sleep problems, as they typically work better and last longer than medicines.

- [**Federal Drug Administration: Side Effects of Sleep**](#)

[**Drugs:**](#) The FDA explains the potential side effects of sleep drugs with an overview of precautions, reactions, and more for adults and children alike.

Sleep Disorders

- [**University of Michigan Health System: Sleep Problems:**](#)

Learn about common sleep problems and how you can help kids get a better night's sleep from the University of Michigan Health System.

- [**Stony Brook Medicine: Children and Sleep Disorders:**](#)

[**What Parents Need to Know:**](#) Parents can identify trouble signs in child sleep and get their child help by using this resource from Stony Brook Medicine.

- [**American Family Physician: Sleep Disorders and Sleep**](#)

[**Problems in Childhood:**](#) Learn about some of the most common

sleep disorders among children from this American Family

Physician article.

Sleep Studies

- [**Gosilano Children's Hospital: What is a Sleep Study?:**](#)

Find out what happens in a child's sleep study from this Gosilano Children's Hospital guide.

- [**Sleep Foundation: Sleep Study for a Child:**](#) Experts explain why children might need a sleep study, how families can prepare, and what to expect in this resource.

- [**The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia: Prepare for Your Child's Sleep Study:**](#) Get ready for a child sleep study using the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's recommendations.

Sleep Habits

- [**Children's Hospital of Philadelphia: Healthy Sleep Habits:**](#) Learn about normal sleep in children, helpful tips, and how you can support healthy sleep habits for your children.

- [**Cleveland Clinic: Healthy Sleep Habits for Children:**](#)

The Cleveland Clinic offers an overview of healthy sleep habits for children and tips for supporting healthy child sleep.

- [**HealthyChildren.org: Healthy Sleep Habits: How Many Hours Does Your Child Need?:**](#) The American Academy of Pediatrics shares important child sleep guidelines and healthy sleep habits for children.

Parenting Help

- [**National Parent Helpline:**](#) Feeling lost as a parent? Get help and emotional support from the National Parent Helpline.
- [**Good Therapy: Parenting:**](#) Find out what good parenting looks like and how you can get therapy for parenting issues from Good Therapy's resource.

Nutrition

- [**Sleep Foundation: Diet, Exercise, and Sleep:**](#) Learn about the connection between diet, exercise, and sleep from the National Sleep Foundation.

- [**Eat Right: How Sleep Habits Affect Healthy Weight:**](#)

This resource from the Academt of Nutrition and Dietetics shares why sleep habits are so important to maintaining a healthy weight in children.

- [**Nutrition.org: An Integrative Review of Sleep for Nutrition Professionals:**](#) This resource from *Advances in Nutrition* shares the relation between sleep and weight status and the importance of sleep in nutritional health.

[Our Favorite Lullabies, Books, and Videos for Helping Children Sleep](#)

- [*The Going to Bed Book* by Sandra Boynton](#)
- [*Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed* by Eileen](#)

[Christelow](#)

- [*Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown](#)
- [*Dr. Seuss's Sleep Book*](#)
- [*Good Night, Gorilla*](#)
- [*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad*](#)

[Day by Judith Viorst](#)

- [*Harold and the Purple Crayon* by Crockett Johnson](#)
- [*Love You Forever* by Robert Munsch](#)

- [*Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak](#)
- [*The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupery](#)
- [*The Cat in the Hat* by Dr. Seuss](#)
- [*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle](#)
- [*In the Night Kitchen* by Maurice Sendak](#)
- [Rockabye Baby! Lullaby Editions of Popular Albums](#)
- [Sleep Music for Children](#)
- [Parenting.com: Popular Lullaby Lyrics](#)
- [Parents: 10 Best Sleep Apps for Better Bedtime](#)
- [One Hour of Brahm's Lullaby](#)
- [Baby Mozart Best of Mozart Baby Sleep and Bedtime](#)

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Popular Reads

[Stages of Sleep and Sleep Cycles](#)

Usually sleepers pass through five stages: 1, 2, 3, 4 ...

[Parent's Guide to Healthy Sleep](#)

Every child needs good sleep for healthy development, growth, and ...

[Mattress Reviews and Comparisons 2017 – Unbiased Sleep Product Database](#)

The research team at Tuck has put together the most ...