

Sleep Habits



School
Mental Health
Ontario

Santé mentale
en milieu scolaire
Ontario



Well-being
St. Clair Catholic District School Board



Facts

- A good night's sleep is important to our physical and mental well-being. For children and youth, getting enough sleep contributes to feeling well, doing well in school and to mood and behaviour.
- For children and youth with mental health concerns, getting enough sleep can mean:
 - less aggression
 - less hyperactivity
 - less depression and anxiety
 - better concentration
- Lack of sleep causes irritability, increased stress, forgetfulness, difficulties with learning and low motivation. Over time, it can contribute to anxiety and depression.
- Sleep time guidelines depend on a child's age. Every child is different, so take time to figure out what works best for your child.
- Your child's brain needs sleep to restore resources that were used up during the day. A well-rested brain can solve problems, learn new information and enjoy the day a lot more than a tired brain. Some areas of your child's brain are even more active while they sleep.
- Children who consistently get a good night's sleep:
 - are more creative
 - can concentrate on tasks for longer
 - have better problem-solving abilities
 - are better able to make positive decisions
 - are more able to learn and remember new things
 - have more energy during the day
 - able to create and maintain good relations with others.
- To be as healthy as possible, children need adequate night time sleep. Current guidelines recommend:
 - 9–11 hours of sleep/night for children ages 5–13 years old
 - 8–10 hours of sleep/night for children 14–17 years old.
- 1 in 4 children are NOT getting enough sleep.
- 1 in 3 children have trouble going to sleep or staying asleep.
- 1 in 5 children have difficulty staying awake during waking hours.
- 1 in 10 children do not find their sleep refreshing.
- Over time, insufficient sleep impacts how a child feels, behaves and interacts
 - 17.2% of children that get insufficient sleep report hyperactivity compared to 11.9% of children who get adequate sleep.
 - 21.5% of children that get insufficient sleep report stress compared to 10.3% of children who get adequate sleep.
 - 11.2% of children that get insufficient sleep report poor mental health compared to 4.5% of children who get adequate sleep.

Tips

- If your child's sleep routine is disrupted, return them to a healthy sleep schedule as soon as possible.
- Have a relaxing bedtime routine. Have a light snack (such as a glass of milk) before bed. Try to go to bed at about the same time every night. Keep your room cool, dark and quiet but open the curtains or turn on the lights as soon as you get up in the morning.
- Always fall asleep in your bed. Use your bed for sleeping only. Avoid doing homework, using a smartphone or tablet, or playing video games while in bed. Try to be in your bed with the lights out for at least 8 hours every night.
- Napping during the day can make it difficult to fall asleep. If you want to nap, keep it short (less than 30 minutes). Definitely don't nap after dinner.
- Get exercise every day, but avoid very hard exercise in the evening.
- Avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, pop, energy drinks), especially after mid-afternoon. Don't use any products to help you sleep such as alcohol, herbal products or over-the-counter sleep aids.
- Limit screen time before bed. Using electronic media and being exposed to the screen's light before trying to sleep can make it harder to fall asleep.
- On weekends, no matter how late you go to bed, try to get up within 2 hours to 4 hours of your usual wake time. This is especially important if you have trouble falling asleep on Sunday nights.
- Make sure you are not trying to do too much. Do you still have some time for fun and to get enough sleep? If you are having trouble sleeping because you have too much on your mind, try keeping a diary or to-do lists. If you write things down before sleep, you may feel less worried or stressed.
- See your doctor if you:
 - have trouble falling asleep at night despite trying the tips in this document.
 - wake up through the night or early in the morning and cannot get back to sleep.
 - continue to feel like you have no energy despite getting enough sleep.
 - are having trouble meeting your responsibilities – such as not being able to go to school, get to work on time, or spend time with your friends.
 - have feelings of sadness that don't seem to go away.
 - have worried feelings that make it hard to focus on other things.
 - often feel sick in other ways (such as headaches, loss of appetite or other symptoms you can't explain).

Resources

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-children-getting-enough-sleep-infographic.html>
- <https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/Article?contentid=645&language=English>
- https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/teens_and_sleep
- <https://keltymentalhealth.ca/sleep>

Sources

- Canada Public Health
- Sick Kids Hospital
- Canadian Pediatric Society