



Promoting Healthy Sleeping Habits in Children and Adolescents

EXTENSION

March 2022

Michael M. Criss

Associate Professor Human Development & Family Science

Amy McGehee

Doctoral Student

Michael Stout

Associate Professor Human Development & Family Science

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Fact Sheets
are also available on our website at:
extension.okstate.edu

What is sleep?

Sleep is a biological process that has two stages: rapid eye movement (REM) sleep and non-REM sleep. While we sleep at night, we go through REM sleep and non-REM sleep multiple times.

Why is sleep important for children and adolescents?

Good sleeping habits are tied to a healthy immune system. Good sleep can clear one's mind after a busy day. Sleeping well also can lead to good mental health overall.

How much sleep should we get?

The amount of sleep needed at night changes with age (see Table 1). As children get older, they need fewer hours of sleep. Newborns need around 14-17 hours of sleep. Preschoolers require 10 to 13 hours of sleep. Adolescents need fewer hours of sleep and have later bed and wake times.

Table 1: Recommended hours of sleep by age

	Hours (Range)
Newborn (0-3 months)*	14-17
Infants (4-12 months)*	12-16
Toddlers (1-2 years)*	11-14
Preschoolers (3-5 years)*	10-13
School Age (6-12 years)*	9-12
Adolescence (13-18 years)*	8-10
Young Adults (18-25)	7-9
Adults (24-64)*	7-9
Older Adults (65 years and older)*	7-8

Note: * includes naps. Source: Hirshkowitz et al. (2015).

Hints for creating healthy sleeping habits.

Creating a bedtime ritual.

Parents should create a bedtime ritual for their children. This could include the child taking a bath and changing into pajamas. The parent also can read a short calming story or poem to the child. Going to bed around the same time each night is important at any age.

Relax before bedtime.

Children have busy lives with school, sports, and homework. These activities can increase stress and sleeping problems. Learning how to relax and unwind at night can help children fall and stay asleep. This can include teaching children not to focus on worries and "bad thoughts" just before bed.

Avoid caffeine and large meals before bedtime.

Parents should teach their kids healthy drinking and eating habits before bed. Drinking caffeine and energy drinks and eating before bed can lead to sleeping problems. Also, drinking liquid (even water) before bed can disrupt sleep.

Creating a healthy sleeping space.

Children can be taught how to create a healthy sleeping space. This includes having a regular space for relaxing and falling asleep. Having a door for the bedroom can block out noises and light. Keeping the room cool, dimly lit, and quiet can improve sleeping. There are also sleeping products, such as weighted blankets, that can help children fall and stay asleep.

Limit screen time before bed.

Children should limit the use of cell phones, computers, and video games before bed. Children who use these devices a lot before bed sleep poorly. For instance, texting before bedtime can distract the natural process of winding down at night. The blue light created by the screens can lower melatonin levels. This can make it harder to fall asleep.

Parents are wonderful role models.

Children also learn good sleeping habits by observing their parents. Also, many of the suggestions mentioned above also work well with adults.

You CAN do it.

Teaching children healthy sleeping habits can be hard for many parents. It can take time to make these changes. Seeking the support of friends and family can help during this process. Finally, it's important to remember that you **can** do this.

The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

WE ARE OKLAHOMA

The Cooperative Extension Service is the largest, most successful informal educational organization in the world. It is a nationwide system funded and guided by a partnership of federal, state, and local governments that delivers information to help people help themselves through the land-grant university system.

Extension carries out programs in the broad categories of agriculture, natural resources and environment; family and consumer sciences; 4-H and other youth; and community resource development. Extension staff members live and work among the people they serve to help stimulate and educate Americans to plan ahead and cope with their problems.

Some characteristics of the Cooperative Extension system are:

- The federal, state, and local governments cooperatively share in its financial support and program direction.
- It is administered by the land-grant university as designated by the state legislature through an Extension director.
- Extension programs are nonpolitical, objective, and research-based information.
- It provides practical, problem-oriented education for people of all ages. It is designated to take the knowledge of the university to those persons who do not or cannot participate in the formal classroom instruction of the university.
- It utilizes research from university, government, and other sources to help people make their own decisions.
- More than a million volunteers help multiply the impact of the Extension professional staff.
- It dispenses no funds to the public.
- It is not a regulatory agency, but it does inform people of regulations and of their options in meeting them.
- Local programs are developed and carried out in full recognition of national problems and goals.
- The Extension staff educates people through personal contacts, meetings, demonstrations, and the mass media.
- Extension has the built-in flexibility to adjust its programs and subject matter to meet new needs. Activities shift from year to year as citizen groups and Extension workers close to the problems advise changes.

Oklahoma State University, as an equal opportunity employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding non-discrimination and affirmative action. Oklahoma State University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all individuals and does not discriminate based on race, religion, age, sex, color, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity/ expression, disability, or veteran status with regard to employment, educational programs and activities, and/or admissions. For more information, visit <https://eeo.okstate.edu>.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President for Agricultural Programs and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of 20 cents per copy. 3/2022 HE