Sleep Needs for Children¹

Suzanna Smith²

Does your school-aged child complain about being sleepy during the day, doze off in class, or yawn a lot? Does he or she go to bed late or have trouble falling asleep? If so, your child may not be getting enough sleep.

Health care providers report that elementary-school-age children need at least 9 hours and recommend 10-11 hours of sleep nightly. Sleep affects children’s ability to concentrate and learn and impacts their overall physical and mental health. In fact, good sleep is just as important as proper nutrition and daily exercise.

A recent study published in the Journal of School Health found that over 60% of students surveyed said they slept too little at least twice a week. They stayed up late when their parents thought they were asleep, and they had trouble falling back asleep after waking up during the night (Armshler & McKenzie, 2005).

Parents can help their children get the sleep they need by creating a healthy sleep environment. Set the room temperature so it is comfortable: not too warm and not too cool. In addition, parents can establish a nighttime routine. Set a regular bedtime and stick to it, and make the time right before bed enjoyable and relaxing, such as with a warm bath and a book. Take distractions such as TVs and computers out of the bedroom, because these interfere with falling and staying asleep.

Bedtime is important and can be a loving time for families. A calm and caring approach to helping your child get a good night’s sleep can give them a great head start to each new day.

Footnotes:

1. This document is FAR0042, one of a series of the Family Youth and Community Sciences Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Broadcast as program 183 in June 2005. Revised February 2008. Published October 2012. In the interest of time and/or clarity, the broadcast version of this script may have been modified. Visit the EDIS website at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu.

2. Suzanna Smith, associate professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, University of Florida, and Executive Producer, Family Album Radio, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.
Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life. “Family Album” is a co-production of University of Florida IFAS Extension, the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, and of WUFT-FM. If you'd like to learn more, please visit our Web site at http://www.familyalbumradio.org.

To listen to the radio broadcast:

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/sleepneeds.mp3

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/sleepneeds.wav

References


