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Published on May 21, 2021 Bedtimes for kids might be one of the most challenging parts of the day. Parents are tired and ready to relax, while kids of all ages seem to find extra energy and want nothing to do with sleep. One more story, one more trip to the bathroom, and one more question quickly make for a late-night, and no one gets the rest they need. If this happens often, you might start wondering if you and your child are getting the proper amount of sleep and how to make bedtime easier. Why is it so crucial for your child to get enough sleep? What does sleep deprivation look like? How do you improve bedtimes for kids? How Sleep Impacts Your Child's Health Whether Young or Old, Sleep is a vital part of staying healthy. There are many benefits to getting the right amount of sleep while not getting enough can have negative consequences. How does it impact your child? Brain Function - Sleep is linked to certain brain functions such as concentration, productivity, and cognition. These all impact a child's behavior and academic success. Weight - Sleep patterns affect the hormones responsible for appetite. A lack of sleep interferes with the ability to regulate food intake, making overeating more likely. Physical Performance - Sleep impacts a person's physical abilities. Proper rest means better performance, concentration, energy, mental clarity, and faster speed. Physical Health - There are many ways sleep promotes health. Sleep heals the body but also helps prevent disease and health issues. Getting proper rest will regulate blood pressure, help prevent heart disease, reduce chances of sleep apnea, reduce inflammation, boost immune system, and lower risk of weight gain. Improve Mental Health - A lack of sleep has a negative impact on mood and social and emotional intelligence. A child not getting proper sleep is more likely to experience depression, lack empathy and be unaware of other people's emotions and reactions. Sleep, Risky Behavior, and Teens Studies found that teens were more likely to engage in risky behavior when they are sleep-deprived. They'll have problems regulating their mood, making them more short-tempered, aggressive, and impulsive. Their inability to self-regulate can even look like the symptoms of ADHD. Sleep deprivation becomes hazardous when teens are driving. The impulsiveness and risk-taking, along with exhaustion, put them at a higher risk for accidents. In fact, driving tired is comparable to driving with a blood alcohol content of .08. You can see why sleep is so essential to everyone's health, but how much is needed? What do pediatricians recommend? Is it the same for all ages? Sleep Recommendations From Pediatricians Sleep requirements vary by age. It won't be the same for every individual. Some people find that they need more sleep than others. Here is a basic guideline of what pediatricians now recommend: Ages 4-12 months: 12-16 hours (including naps) Ages 1-2 years: 11-14 hours (including naps) Ages 3-5 years: 10-13 hours (including naps) Age 6-12 years: 9-12 hours Age 13-18 years: 8-10 hours Increase the amount of sleep if your child isn't thriving on the recommended amount. Signs Your Child Isn't Getting Enough Sleep There are ways to tell if your child is getting adequate sleep beyond the usual grumpiness. Here are specific things to watch out for: Excessive sleepiness during the day Difficulty waking up on time Hyperactivity Depression Irritability Mood swings Aggressive behavior Irritability Impulsiveness Impulse control As you can see, prolonged lack of sleep can cause relational problems and hinder your child's ability to do well in school. What can you do if you realize your child is not getting enough sleep? How can you improve bedtimes for your kids? How to Set Up a Bedtime Routine Sleep hygiene or a bedtime schedule will help your child fall asleep faster. It will also improve the quality of sleep. You will need to adjust to what works for your family, but the following suggestions can help everyone have a more pleasant bedtime. For Babies Most people think they have to let their baby "cry it out" at bedtime. However, there are ways you can teach a baby to sleep without tears, making the experience more pleasant for everyone. In fact, studies show the faded bedtime method—or gentle sleep training—is just as effective as leaving a baby to cry but without the stress. What is gentle sleep training? Gentle Sleep Training This method eases babies and young children into falling asleep on their own. There are two ways to do this: 1. Positive Routines With Faded Bedtime Kids learn to fall asleep easily by using comforting, quiet, and predictable rituals, up to twenty minutes long. The key is to choose a bedtime that's not too early. A child that isn't tired will only fight sleep. Start the process when your baby or child is sleepy, even if it's later than you'd prefer. You'll notice a pattern and quickly discover the time they naturally start winding down. Make this their bedtime for now. They will learn to associate sleep with the routine, and you'll be able to start fifteen to twenty minutes earlier to slowly adjust their schedule. 2. Sleep With Parental Presence With this method, you lie down with your baby or child until they fall asleep. Over time, you pay less attention to your child, gradually sitting up, then sitting in a chair. Eventually, your child will be able to sleep without you. A study showed that using this method helped infants sleep longer and wake up less. Both of these ways take time but are effective and less traumatic than leaving an infant or a young child to cry. More Tips to Help Your Baby Sleep Better You want to build a routine, but how? What are practical things you can do to help your baby get ready for bed? Here are tips for a soothing and calm bedtime: Help set their "internal clock" by exposing them to natural daylight, daytime activities, and the calmness of evening. Block blue light exposure. Make the hour up to bedtime calm, peaceful, and pleasant. Learn how to keep stress minimal for you and your baby. Don't force sleep. It will increase anxiety and make rest more difficult. Avoid late afternoon naps. Prolong the time between nap and bedtime. Feed baby right before bed. Avoid intervening too soon if the baby starts to wake up. Give your child a chance to fall back asleep without your help. For Elementary-Aged Children It's easier to follow a routine if you start young, but it's never too late to begin. The good news is it only takes a few nights to notice an improvement in your child's sleep. These ideas will help you set up a schedule that will encourage your child to fall asleep easier, faster, and for a more extended period. Offer them a nutritious snack. Bathe them. Brush their teeth and go to the bathroom. Read them a story. Sing them a song. Cuddle or massage them. Talk about the day. For best results, choose a handful of activities and do them in the same order each night. Dim the lights and keep activity minimal to help everyone slow down. For Teens They might fight the idea of getting more sleep, but teens will benefit from a routine, too. They're usually capable of overseeing their bedtime, but a little structure and oversight can help them get the sleep they need. By implementing the following tips, your teen can get better rest. Avoid caffeine in the evening. Limit screen time. Avoid late-night binging. Exercise, ideally sixty minutes a day. Keep the bedroom dark, cool, and quiet. Talk through problems. Quality Sleep for a Healthy Life Bedtimes for kids can be an enjoyable part of the day with proper sleep hygiene in place. Not only can it be quality time with your child, but it can also teach them important life skills. It's the road to good health and high performance. By implementing these tips, you can ensure proper rest for the whole family and better bedtimes for kids. More Guides on Kids' Bedtimes Featured photo credit: Igordoon Primus via unsplash.com I've been around several brand-new babies lately, and listened to other mommies complain... "Don't you just miss the 'new baby' phase?" Or, "Don't you just wish they would stay so tiny? Um, no. And no. Honestly, I don't know if I was particularly good at the new-baby phase. Of course I loved it and I loved my new baby. But NOW is so much better! I love that Emmett has such big personality now. I love that he gives me a big hug. I love that he recognizes me and gets upset when I leave him. And I love that he can move around and entertain himself and bump his head, and I'm not constantly standing over him worrying that he's going to break. Plus, eating solid foods is fun! Kindly ignore my collection of Amazon boxes in the background. Thanks! Do you love the new baby phase? Or do you think babies are more fun as they get older? This content is created and maintained by a third party, and imported onto this page to help users provide their email addresses. You may be able to find more information about this and similar content at piano.io