

SLEEP IS SO IMPORTANT

Sleep helps your brain work properly. It is while we sleep that the brain organizes and sets in place what we have "learned" while we were awake. Also while you are asleep your brain is preparing for the next day. It is forming new pathways to help you learn and remember information. Good quality sleep, undisturbed and long enough, makes this brain activity happen. This is essential to learning and brain development.

- Getting enough quality sleep at the right times can help protect your mental health, physical health, quality of life, and safety. For children sleep helps support growth and development.
- Studies have shown that without enough sleep children have more difficulty learning in general. A good night's sleep improves decision making, problem solving, ability to cope with change, motivation, the ability to get along with others, and strengthens the immune system. Children who have not had sufficient sleep are more irritable and have more discipline problems.

How Much Sleep Does My child Need?

- The National Institutes of Health, based on research, recommends that elementary school age students need 10 to 11 hours each night (and their parents need 7 to 9 hours).
- At different ages we need different amounts of sleep and not all people of any age need the same amount of sleep. Watch your child and talk to his or her teacher to help decide whether your child needs more or less sleep than the average.

Wow! So What Is a Good Bedtime?

Assuming that SHSCS students will get up by 7:15 a.m. to get to school about 8:15 a.m., *bedtime needs to be about 8:30 p.m. with the expectation that the child would be asleep by 8:45 p.m.* This schedule would let the child get about ten and a half hours of sleep. Adjust bedtime based on your child's needs so that he or she gets at least ten hours.

What Can I Do To Help My Child Get Enough Sleep?

- Going from Summer to the School Year, have a transition plan
One of the hardest times of the year to insure your child gets enough sleep is at the beginning of the school year. Helping your child transition from a summer sleep schedule to the one they need for the school year takes planning. If a child has been going to sleep at midnight and waking up at 10 a.m., without a deliberate transition plan, he or she will have great difficulty waking up and staying awake at the start of the

school year. Experts recommend that before school starts parents begin to adjust minutes at a time making a new adjustment every 2-3 days. If you don't have enough time before school starts to follow that schedule, make adjustments every day or two.

Then all year long, The National Sleep Foundation recommends:

- Make helping your children get enough sleep (and you too) a priority.
- Be consistent.

Have a consistent bedtime (see the suggestions above) and wake time. This sets and aligns expectations for both you and your child and allows you to plan the bedtime routine accordingly. Bedtime routines that include activities such as a glass of milk, a bath, brushing your teeth, and reading a book signal the brain that it is time shift into a sleep mode.

Sleeping-in an hour or two on the weekends shouldn't be too disruptive. But if a child wakes up at 7:15 during the week, letting them sleep past 9:00 on the weekend is a mistake.

- Teamwork.

If you are co-parenting, it is important to discuss your strategy beforehand and work as a team. If you are beginning a nighttime program after having some difficulty with your child, explain your new expectations, if your child is old enough.

- Cut down on electronics

Electronic devices such as TV, computers, smart phones, and tablets emit a lot of light, the kind of light that is very stimulating to the eye and the brain. Light can prevent secretion of melatonin, a hormone that helps regulate sleep cycles by tricking the brain into thinking its still daytime. To help children fall asleep they should stop using electronics at least two hours before bedtime.

- Watch sugar and caffeine intake

Sugary foods and drinks, particularly sodas which often have a lot of caffeine, naturally make having a regular sleep cycle more difficult. Children should not have any caffeinated drink after lunchtime.

- Trick the brain by controlling the light where they sleep

Because of Daylight Savings time it will still be light out for a while into the fall when it is time for children to go to bed. And of course it is harder for children to sleep if there's a lot of light coming through the windows. Good shades or curtains over the windows will help children fall asleep easier. More light in the morning and less in the evening results in a quicker adjustment in melatonin levels.