

PARENTING ADVICE

- *Sleep deprived Children have health problems*
- If your child has frequent health and/or emotional problems, consider that a lack of sleep may be all or at least part of the problem.
- Every function in the body is affected by sleep. And for a child, the risks of sleep deprivation are much more serious than simply waking up in a grumpy mood. Research shows that children with sleep disturbances have more medical problems such as allergies, ear infections, and hearing problems. They are also more likely to have social and emotional problems.
- There is a whole host of health problems that have consistently been associated with inadequate sleep.
- *Sleep loss is linked to obesity and diabetes*
- Sleep loss can contribute to weight gain and obesity by triggering the hormones that regulate appetite and hunger. In other words, inadequate sleep may cause children to overeat. A lack of sleep changes the circulating levels of the hormones that regulate hunger, boosting appetite and a person's preference for high-calorie, high-carbohydrate foods.
- Many physicians believe that sleep loss can also affect the ability to metabolize sugar and trigger insulin resistance, a well-known factor for diabetes. Inadequate sleep may prompt development of insulin-resistance, a well-known risk factor for diabetes. (In recent years, there has been a dramatic rise in the incidence of childhood obesity as well as type 2 diabetes.)
- *Sleep loss is associated with anxiety and depression*
- Insomnia is a significant risk factor for depression. It also contributes to anxiety by raising cortisol, the stress hormone. We have known for some time that depression and anxiety can contribute to insomnia; however, recent research has shown that insomnia often precedes the first episode of depression or of a relapse. Physicians are looking more closely at the importance of solving sleep problems in order to eliminate or decrease the severity of anxiety or emerging depression.
- *Sleep loss may impede physical development*
- The highest levels of growth hormone are released into the bloodstream during deep sleep. Because sleep deprivation results in a decrease in the release of growth hormone, height and growth may be affected by a lack of sleep.
- *Sleep loss affects immunity*
- During sleep, interleukin-1, an immune boosting substance, is released. Several nights of poor rest can hamper a child's immunity.
- *Sleep deprived children are more Accident Prone*
- A lack of sleep has an adverse affect on motor skills. A tired child is an accident waiting to happen. Bicycle injuries and accidents on playground equipment are more likely to occur

when a child is sleep deprived. And unfortunately, the stakes get continually higher when poor sleeping habits continue and the accident prone child becomes the teenager who is driving while drowsy.

- *Teach children to relax themselves to sleep*
- If you are a parent, it's important to realize that in order for your child to be physically and emotionally healthy as well as a successful student, it's vital for him to get a sufficient amount of quality sleep.
- As research continues to emerge, we are realizing that a good night's sleep is as important as proper nutrition affecting mood, immunity, and the ability to learn. Unfortunately, children sleep problems are extremely common. In 2004, the National Sleep Foundation reported that a whopping 69 percent of children under the age of ten have sleep difficulties. Factors that contribute to this modern day malady include lax rules, difficulty transitioning from the family bed, stress, overstimulation, and the media
- While the number of children with sleep problems is staggering, by improving sleep hygiene and teaching children to relax, the majority of them are relatively easy to solve. But most parenting books on the subject focus on babies and give scant attention to the most useful, long-term solution for children which is to teach them to purposely relax their bodies and minds so that they can relax and fall asleep.
- The majority of sleep experts advise parents to abruptly withdraw their attention at bedtime with no mention of teaching a child self-soothing skills. But many parents are looking for help after having shared their bed or assisted their child in falling asleep for months or even years. When children are abruptly expected to fall asleep without any assistance, it sets the scene for the all too familiar nightly bedtime battle.
- If parents consistently ignore their children anguished pleas for attention, after weeks of tears and tantrums, children will eventually begin to fall asleep on their own. But in the same amount of time, parents could have avoided the battles by teaching their kids to relax themselves to sleep while gradually and systematically decreasing their attention.
- Children two most frequent sleep problems involve not being able to fall asleep and awakening during the night unable to fall back asleep. Brief night awakening is normal; however, once kids learn to fall asleep independently at bedtime, they will be able to fall back asleep when they briefly awaken during the night.
- For children, learning to relax and fall asleep on their own is an important step towards independence. However, the benefits of conscious relaxation far outweigh even this worthwhile achievement. By learning to purposefully relax and calm themselves, children will become more resilient and better equipped to deal with life's inevitable ups and downs.
- *Ways to solve your child's sleep problems*
- *Pinpoint the problem by keeping a sleep journal*
- For at least a week, record your child's sleep habits. This will help you to recognize the behaviors or habits that are contributing to a child's sleep difficulties or alert you to a more serious problem. If you determine that you need a physician's assistance, your observations will be invaluable in helping your doctor make an accurate assessment.

- *Have a set bed time*
- Children should consistently go to bed at the same time every night. Even on the weekends, bedtime should not vary by more than one hour a night or a total of two hours for the entire weekend.
- *Have a consistent bed time routine*
- Create a consistent bedtime ritual in a predictable calming environment that serves as a bridge between the excitement of daytime and the restful quiet of nighttime.
- *Practice relaxation techniques*
- During the bedtime routine, take a few minutes to practice self-soothing relaxation techniques such as progressive relaxation, attending to the breath, and visualization.
- *If your child has trouble falling asleep , use the fade technique*
- Gradually, give your child less and less direction as he uses self-soothing techniques to relax and fall asleep. At first, you may want to sit on the edge of your child's bed while he or she follows the relaxation directions on The Floppy Sleep Game Book CD. Or, you can teach your child to relax through a relaxation routine that you create yourself. Over a period of time, as your child becomes more familiar with the relaxation routine, sit further and further away until he or she no longer needs you in the room to relax and fall asleep.