

FACTSHEET

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Weight Management Tip: Improve your child's sleep

Did you know...?

The length and the quality of your sleep can affect your weightand a weight problem can lead to sleep problems.

Sleep and weight are strongly connected in children, adolescents and adults.

Not getting enough sleep can change how your hormones work leaving you more likely to have a bigger appetite and gain weight.

It can also be hard to stay positive and focused on making healthy lifestyle changes if you are not getting enough sleep.

Generally primary school age children need a lot of sleep – often more than you think! (For more information on normal sleep patterns see www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/normal-sleep-patterns-0-16-years)

Getting that extra bit of sleep can often help children who are obese to lose weight.

If you are not sure what time your primary school (or younger) aged child should go to bed:

- first, work out what time they need to get up in the morning so that they have enough time to sit down and eat breakfast and do other essential things before starting the day
- then count back between 10 and 12 hours.

What can I do to help my child get a better night's sleep?

There are many things which a family can do to help a child sleep better. Some important strategies include:

Physical Activity

Daily exercise helps sleep (a lot). However it is best to avoid rigorous physical activity within one hour of sleep time.

Routine, routine and more routine

- Having a set way of doing things every night really does help kids get to sleep. For example, the family routine might be dinner, bath, books and bed.
- The more consistent you are with falling asleep and wake up times, the better. So ideally, even on weekends, the children should not stay up too much later or sleep in.
- It also helps if the kids sleep in their own bed.
- To avoid daytime naps, encourage your child to stay off the bed during the day.

Have a period of time for winding down before bedtime with a “shut down” of all electronic devices

- Reading books or telling stories is a much more effective way of settling a child down rather than letting them watch T.V. or DVDs or play computer games. “Screen Time” should stop at least one hour before bed time.

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- Do not have a television, game console, or computer in the bedroom.

Often kids do resist going to bed and can be a bit disruptive at bedtime. It's really important to stay low key and calm. If children get up then persistently take them back to bed.

So:

As a family talk about the possible need to develop better sleep habits then put some strategies into action.

If you have any concerns about your child's sleep, please speak with your doctor or one of the other health professionals involved in treating your child. It is particularly important to talk to your doctor if children are snoring or sound like they are having difficulty breathing when asleep.

Remember

- Helping your child to sleep for longer may also help them to lose weight. Aim for 10-12 hours' sleep each night for primary school aged children and younger
- Ensure your child stops using electronic devices at least one hour before going to bed.
- Daily physical activity and a regular night time routine helps promote a good night's sleep.