

SLEEP & SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

SLEEP FOR WELLBEING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE



THE NEED FOR SLEEP

Sleep is the primary activity of the brain during early development. It is especially important for children as it directly impacts mental and physical development.

Children aged 6-13 years need 9-11 hours of sleep. This coincides with an increasing demand on their time from school (including homework), sports and other extracurricular and social activities. In addition, school-aged children become more interested in TV, computers, the media and internet activities as well as stimulating foods – all of which can lead to difficulty falling asleep, nightmares and disruptions to their sleep quantity and quality.

The challenge facing parents of school-aged children is putting in place routines that ensure children get their required amount of sleep.

The facts you need to know:

- **Primary school-aged children (6-13 years) require between 9-11 hours of sleep each night**
- **Poor sleep affects cognitive function, language development and academic performance**
- **Poor sleep affects mood, behaviour and emotional stability**
- **Many sleep problems in children are linked to difficult behavior and can be addressed by parents**

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CONSEQUENCES FOR CHILDREN

Poor or inadequate sleep can lead to mood swings, behavioral and cognitive problems in children that can impact their ability to learn in school. Signs of sleep deprivation in a school setting include:

- Being late for school
- Falling asleep or feeling sleepy during the day
- Moodiness/grumpiness and difficult behaviour
- Difficulty concentrating
- Decreased learning of new facts and tasks
- Poor academic grades/performance at school

BEHAVIOURAL SLEEP PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN

Many sleep problems in children are linked to difficult behaviour around bedtime. The most common behavioural issues amongst school-aged children are:

- Not getting into bed
- Not settling to sleep
- Not staying in their own bed
- Waking parents up at night
- Rising too early in the morning



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

The good news for parents is that you can improve or solve the majority of these behavioural sleep challenges. There are new behaviours that your children can learn. To start, you can help your child by:

- Developing a sleep plan
- Providing time for outside play and exercise during the day
- Establishing a regular sleep schedule and a consistent 'lights out' time
- Creating a relaxing pre-sleep routine
- Avoiding stimulating foods before bed

You can also make your child's bedroom 'sleep friendly':

- Keep the room dark at night (a small, dim night light can help a child feel safe)
- Avoid technology devices in the bedroom
- Keep the room cool and well ventilated
- Limit noise
- Try to keep the bedroom for sleeping, not entertainment or a place for punishment

SLEEP PROBLEMS AND DISORDERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

Sleep problems and disorders are also prevalent at this age. There are a number of common sleep disorders that are known to affect children. These include:

- Snoring
- Obstructive Sleep Apnoea
- Restless Legs Syndrome
- Parasomnias (including sleep terrors, sleep walking and nightmares)
- Anxiety related insomnia

Sleep problems might not be noticed for some time because they are not easy for parents to detect. Most problems and disorders can be treated.

Further information:

<http://breathingspacehealth.com.au>

<http://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/fact-sheets-a-z/229-behavioural-sleep-problems-in-school-aged-children.html>

[http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/bedwetting_\(cyh\).html#whatparents](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/bedwetting_(cyh).html#whatparents)