

Is your child getting enough sleep at night?

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Children may not be able to tell you when they aren't getting enough sleep—but their actions will certainly let you know. If you are noticing that your child has a short attention span, is irritable, restless, impatient, lethargic, anxious or tearful, you might consider adding a little more sleep into their schedule.

“Children and adolescents perform better in school after getting eight to 10 hours of sleep,” says Anne Packard Spicer, DC, faculty clinician at Northwestern Health Sciences University. She suggests these tips to make sure your kids are getting the sleep they need in order to have a stable and productive day:

—Routine, routine, routine! Children thrive when they have set schedules. Pick an appropriate bedtime and stick to it.

—Mom doesn't do it that way. Make sure that all caretakers know your child's bedtime routine. Children may feel stressed and anxious around bedtime if their routine is disrupted. The routine may incorporate bath time, reading and listening to calming music.

—Everyone needs a little R&R. After-dinner playtime should be relaxing to help children wind down after an active day. The routine downtime will act as a signal to your child's body that bedtime is near.

—Eat dinner early. Although a light snack is okay, it's best to give your child's body a break at night. Digesting a large meal might disrupt sleep and lead to heartburn.

—Kill the buzz. Provide your children with a caffeine-free diet to make sure they can fall asleep with ease. Also, make sure your children are active enough throughout the day so they are tired in time for bed.

Throughout most of the elementary school years, kids should be getting about 10 hours of sleep per night. Prior to elementary school they'll need more, while preteens may need a little less.

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According to a survey by the National Sleep Foundation, 60 percent of school-aged children said they felt fatigued during the day. “Children who get inadequate sleep are also more likely to be obese,” says Dr. Packard Spicer. So to get your child off to a good, healthy start each day make sure they are getting adequate sleep each night.