



# Notes from the School Nurses

## A Nurse's Guide to Good Sleep Practices

### Getting enough sleep is an important part of kids' health.

Kids who don't get enough sleep are at risk for:

- Falling asleep (and behind) in school
- Problems with memory, concentration and problem solving
- Behavior or mood problems such as hyperactivity, irritability, anxiety or depression



### What is the right amount of sleep?

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends the following:

- 3-5 years old: 10-13 hours of sleep (including naps)
- 6-12 years old: 9-12 hours of sleep
- 13-18 years old: 8-10 hours of sleep

These numbers are actual hours of quality sleep recommended. Kids may take 5-30 minutes to fall asleep, so bedtime should be planned accordingly.

For example, an elementary student needs approximately 10 hours of sleep. If they wake up at 7 am, they should go to bed at 8:30 pm to allow them time to fall asleep and still get 10 hours of uninterrupted sleep. Middle and High Schools start at 7:30 am. If a student needs a minimum of 8 hours sleep and they wake up at 6 am, they should be in bed by 9:45 pm.

### Sleep Tricks

It is important for kids of all ages to avoid screen time before bed, because the glow from cell phones, tablets or TV screens can suppress our natural sleep-inducing hormone melatonin.

- **Young Children:** Try the routine of "Brush, Book, Bed." A nightly ritual of brushing their teeth, followed by reading a book or two with a parent or loved one is a relaxing way to end the day.
- **Older Children:** Benefit from a predictable bedtime (even on the weekends). Participating in at least 60 minutes of physical activity during the day can help kids to fall asleep and to get better quality of sleep. With many options of extra-curricular activities, now is the time to teach them that they can't do everything. Help them to make choices. Having too much on their plate (or mind) can keep them up at night.
- **Teens:** Need to be reminded to avoid screen time before bed, and skip caffeine and sugary snacks past mid-afternoon. Encourage them to follow a healthy ritual before bed, such as a cup of herbal tea, reading a book, or some light stretching.