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# Is My Child Getting Enough Sleep?

Many children go through their days sleep-deprived. When children do not get enough sleep their actions can be wrongly classified as “behavior problems.” Due to lack of sleep, they may have trouble controlling their emotions. This happens because the part of the brain that helps us regulate our responses and actions is greatly affected by the amount of sleep we get.

Parents are sometimes unsure of actually how much sleep a child needs. The chart below was created using data from the University of Michigan Health System. It shows you a ballpark amount of sleep a child needs.

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### **Age and Total Hours of Sleep Needed**

* Infant: 16 hours, including naps
* Toddler: 11 - 14 hours, including 1 or 2 naps
* Preschool: 10 - 13 hours, including a nap
* Elementary: 9 - 12 hours a night
* Middle School: 8 - 10 hours a night

It’s importante mentioning that the Pediatric Academy of EEUU recommends that all screens (TV, cell phones, tablets, laptops) must turn off half an hour before sleeping. Also it’s recommended that all this devices are not in children’s bedrooms.

The chart lists the average amount of sleep for each age group. Some children need a bit more sleep or are able to do well with a little less sleep. The goal is to ensure that your child is getting the right amount for him/her. Ask yourself these questions to determine if your child is sleep-deprived:

* Can my children fall asleep within 15 to 30 minutes?
* Do my children wake easily from their sleep?
* Are they awake and alert throughout the day?
* Do my children often fall asleep in the car?
* Do my children seem irritable, very emotional, aggressive or hyperactive during the day?

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, your children may be sleep-deprived. Here are some tips that can help your children get that much-needed rest:

* Pick a natural bedtime when your child gets physically tired and begins to slow down.
* Create a consistent, simple bedtime ritual. Include quiet activities such as a song, a story, a bath and calm, quiet cuddling. End the routine with turning the lights down and saying, “goodnight.”
* Allow only two comfort items for sleeping – any more could be distracting.
* Be consistent and firm about the purpose of bedtime. Bedtime is for lying in the bed and falling asleep.
* Use bedtime as an enjoyable, resting, cuddling and sleeping time, never as punishment.
* Use dim lights for sleeping times and brighter lights during awake times.
* Avoid foods and drinks that contain caffeine throughout the day.

Sleep deprivation can cause behavior-related problems that affect your child’s daily interactions with others. Children who get enough sleep are better prepared to regulate their emotions, think clearer and enjoy their day.

Source: <https://www.childtime.com/parent-resource-center/parenting-articles/is-my-child-getting-enough-sleep/>