

SLEEP



We all constantly deprioritise sleep – if your child has unfinished homework, a test to study for or a project due, sleep is the easiest thing to put off. However, the consequences of not getting enough sleep, or not getting good quality sleep, are quite severe. Sleep is critical for children as it directly impacts mental and physical development. In his book, *Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child*, Marc Weissbluth, MD says, "Sleeping well increases brainpower just as weight lifting builds stronger muscles, because sleeping well increases your attention span and allows you to be physically relaxed and mentally alert at the same time."

Parents, we advise you to start healthy sleep habits early! It is much easier to forge good habits than correct bad ones. We provide a few suggestions on healthy sleeping below, but we would love to hear from you if you have any other suggestions or questions! Please write to us at ois@healthspring.in, or call 6130-3535 to speak with Dr. Khullar, who is the Healthspring paediatrician at OIS.

Maintain a regular sleep schedule: Ideally, children should sleep and wake at the same time every day irrespective of the day of the week. Consistency in the sleep schedule allows adequate sleep pressure to build up by late evening. Sleep required varies by age and by individual, but as a general rule of thumb, children typically need 9-12 hours of sleep per night.

Have a relaxing bedtime routine: Children should have 1 hour of quiet time before sleeping; this can include reading a book, listening to music, or anything else that is calming and enjoyable. Television and computers should not be part of the bedtime routine, as they over-stimulate the brain.

Make the child's bedroom conducive to sleep: Children's bedrooms should be quiet, dark and cool. If your child is afraid of the dark, a nightlight is acceptable. Do not have a television in the children's room as this may interfere with regularising sleep patterns.

Consider the effect of food on sleep patterns: Children should finish their dinner 1.5-2 hours before their bed time. Also avoid caffeine in the late afternoon and evening as it can persist in the body for several hours after consumption. Carbonated drinks and chocolate (aside from the more obvious tea and coffee) can all be sources of caffeine.



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