**Nursing Notes**

Get Your Rest!

Just like healthy eating and regular exercise are important for overall health, healthy sleep habits are important for children as well.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, preschoolers typically need about 11 to 13 hours of sleep a night, kids up to 12 years old need 10 to 11 hours of sleep a night and teens need about 8.5 to 9.25 hours. Many studies have associated inadequate sleep in children with poor physical and mental health, including impaired academic performance, depression, injury, and increased obesity risk.

But getting enough sleep is often easier said than done. Here are a few tips to help families work toward and maintain healthy sleep habits.

* Provide a dark and quiet sleeping environment.
* Remove electronics from the bedroom. A recent study published in *Pediatrics* of more than 2,000 fourth and seventh graders in Massachusetts concluded that the presence of small screens (like smart phones) in the bedroom and the use of TV or video/computer games were associated with shorter weekday sleep duration.
* Limit screen time just before bed time. Set rules for younger children and offer cues to older ones to encourage relaxing activities such as reading a book in a dimly lit area before bed.
* Encourage consistent bed/wake up time both during the week and on the weekends. “Catching up” on sleep on the weekends can lead to feeling more tired during the week when earlier wake up times are a necessity.
* Create a consistent bedtime ritual such as a bath and reading a book.
* Use reward systems to offer positive reinforcement for health sleep habits. For example, earning a sticker for going to bed on time.

This article was adapted from online sleep resources published by the National Sleep Foundation, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. For more information, contact your School Nurse.

Stay Healthy,

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