

# IS YOUR CHILD GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?

How a lack of sleep could be affecting your child's performance and behaviour at school

It's important that children and young people get enough sleep. Tiredness can impact their mood and concentration, and cause their performance and behaviour to dip in school. Here, we will look at how much sleep your child should get, the effects of sleep deprivation, and what you can do to help them get a better night's sleep.



## How much sleep does a child need?

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Children need more sleep than adults as they need more energy to help them continue to grow and develop. However, every child is different, so the amount of sleep they need can vary. Research suggests that school-age children usually need the following amounts to be completely rested:

**Children aged 6-13 years** – approximately 9 to 11 hours each night

**Children aged 14-17 years** – approximately 8 to 10 hours each night

If a young person regularly gets less sleep than recommended, they may become sleep deprived which can cause a number of issues.

## How does a lack of sleep impact on a young person's performance at school?

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If your child isn't getting the amount of sleep they need, this can result in their brain being unable to function as well as it could. This can interrupt their learning and development, and stop them performing to the best of their ability. Some of the ways that poor sleep can affect your child's school performance include:

- **Causing them to think more slowly than usual**
- **Making more mistakes in their work**
- **Becoming more forgetful – not being able to remember things they have already learnt, and finding it difficult to hold onto new information**
- **Difficulty concentrating or focusing during lessons, and spending a lot of time 'daydreaming'**
- **Not having enough energy to participate in physical lessons such as PE**

These effects mean that young people may fall behind in their schoolwork, and achieve poorer grades.



## How does a lack of sleep impact on a child's behaviour at school?

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Poor sleep can also cause behavioural issues at school. These may include:

- **Low mood and seeming to be 'grumpy' all the time**
- **Anxiety and irritability**
- **Being more emotional and sensitive to criticism – children who are sleep deprived may cry more**
- **Being less able to socialise and play with friends, which could lead to young people becoming isolated**
- **Defiant behaviour**
- **Daytime sleepiness, which may even cause children to fall asleep during lessons**
- **Being more clumsy or accident prone**
- **Hyperactivity, impulsivity and excessive talking. These symptoms are similar to those of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)**



## Other effects of sleep deprivation in children

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As well as impacting on performance and behaviour at school, prolonged sleep deprivation in children can cause a number of other problems, including:

- **Persistent low moods which could lead to depression**
- **Stunted growth, particularly height**
- **Obesity**
- **Heart and lung problems**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Increased stress hormones**
- **Damage to the immune system**

## What you can do as a parent to

# ENSURE YOUR CHILD IS GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP

There are a number of things that you can do to help your child achieve enough good quality sleep:

### *Establish a consistent sleep routine*

Try and make sure that your child goes to bed and wakes up at the same time every day. Instead of letting them lie-in until late at weekends, wake them at a time that isn't too different from when they get up during the week. You could also introduce a consistent 'wind-down' routine in the evenings so they are relaxed before bed. For example, you could encourage them to have a warm bath, or read a book before going to sleep.

### *Make sure your child has a comfortable bed and bedroom*

Noise, light and temperature should be tailored to your child's preferences, if possible, to make them feel comfortable and able to drift off to sleep.

### *Limit the amount of stimulants and sugar that your child consumes before bed*

These substances, which could include caffeine, chocolate and sweets, can prevent your child from getting to sleep. Also try and limit the amount of liquids they drink before bed, so they don't keep waking up needing the toilet.

### *Encourage your child to exercise each day*

Encouraging your child to get some exercise every day can help them get to sleep more easily at night. This might be going for a walk or playing some form of sport. However, this shouldn't happen too late in the evening as the burst of energy could keep your child awake.

### *Avoid electronic devices late at night*

You should aim to remove all electronic devices such as computers, mobiles and tablets within 30-60 minutes of your child's target bedtime. These devices give off bright light which can be overly stimulating and keep your child awake. If your child wants to read before bed, make sure they have an actual book or magazine, as opposed to a screen.

Childhood and adolescence are such important stages in our development, and the effects of sleep deprivation can be far-reaching. By recognising the signs of sleep deprivation, you will be better equipped to spot the signs that your child isn't getting the amount of sleep they need, and take steps to address this.





## Find out more

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For further information on our Young People's Services and sleep disorders (including insomnia), please visit the Priory website.  
at [www.priorygroup.com](http://www.priorygroup.com)

