

Better Sleep

- Keep a regular bedtime (and within 1 hour of this on weekends)
- No electronics for 1 hour before bedtime (too stimulating)
- No television in the bedroom
- Daily physical activity, but NOT in the last hour before bedtime (too stimulating)
- Have a relaxing bedtime routine: e.g., half hour before bedtime, have child brush teeth & get changed, read a story during whatever time is left before bedtime (note: this also tends to speed up the brushing and changing for those who dawdle)
- Some children sleep better with one or more of the following: white noise (e.g., fan or dryer), small nightlight (not too bright!), warm milk & cereal (tryptophan effect), soft music or relaxation CD, warm bath or shower, stuffed animal or other soft toy, evening prayer, melatonin 3mg in a darkened room (over-the-counter)
- Don't go back to check if the child is asleep, as this practice often wakens light sleepers
- Regular morning wake time (and within 1 hour of this on weekends) regardless of when child fell asleep the night before
- Teens sometimes have "night owl" tendencies, and if severe may need to stay up for 36 hours in order to re-set their day/night cycles
- Alarm clocks help, but only if you can't shut them off while in bed, so place across the room
- In the morning, track and positively reinforce "good nights" for those who need to improve in sleeping independently of parents
- No daytime naps except in the very young (i.e. preschoolers)
- Wake the child who naps in the car as soon as it is safe to do so
- Establishing a healthy pattern may take a few weeks, and there will be good nights and bad nights, so persevere!

Reduce the Pressure!

Remember:

- Older children generally need less sleep than younger children, but there is lots of variation from one person to the next, so judge the "right amount" by whether or not the child seems rested and not too grumpy, rather than worrying about what the books say
- An occasional night without sleep is not dangerous, and usually does not result in catastrophic school failure (tell the child this too, if anxious about sleep)
- Sleep cannot be forced, you can only create conditions that make it more likely to happen
- There is a value to having a child resting quietly in his or her room, even if not fully asleep (and also, most people who are in bed at night tend to underestimate how much they actually sleep)