

## When You Snooze You Don't Lose: Establishing Healthy Sleep Habits And Fun Bedtime Routines For Your Family

(NAPSA)—For many children, even though school is out, the summer months fill up fast with outdoor and recreational activities, from summer camps to summer jobs and sports. Establishing and maintaining a healthy sleep routine can help children keep up with those busy schedules.

Improving your child's quality and timing of sleep can help him or her perform better at play, or on the job. Current evidence and literature indicates that pre-adolescents (5–10 years of age) should get at least 10 hours of sleep each night, while teens (10–17 years of age) require slightly less sleep, needing between nine and 10 hours nightly.

"It's important to develop a regular and consistent sleep schedule and bedtime routine for your child, as getting enough quality sleep on a regular basis affects their overall mental health, physical health, quality of life, and safety," said Dr. Michael J. Twery, director of the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research, in the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health. "Children who don't get enough sleep can be more temperamental, irritable, hyperactive, and inattentive, and can increase their risk of injury."

To make sure your child develops healthy sleep habits, the NHLBI recommends the following easy steps:

- Maintain a consistent sleep schedule. Although summer activities may vary, it's important for children to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day. Reinforcing your child's biological clock makes it easier to fall asleep quickly and wake up feeling fully rested and alert.

- Establish proper pre-bedtime eating habits. Avoid feeding your child a big meal too close to bedtime. It also is best to discourage drinking sodas or other beverages with caffeine within six hours of bedtime.

- Track sleep patterns. Help your child keep a sleep log for one



week to calculate how much sleep he or she is getting. You can make a chart to organize your child's time to fit in more sleep if needed.

- Create a comfortable, sleep-friendly environment. Creating a calm and relaxing sleep environment can help your child get a good night's sleep. Try keeping the room quiet, dark, and at a temperature that's comfortable for your child. Removing distracting items from the room, such as a television or video games, also may be helpful. It's always good to disconnect from electronic devices to help create a sleep-friendly environment.

- Unwind before bed. Allow your child to relax and de-stress following a day of summer fun. Children of all ages may enjoy a bath. You also may try reading your younger child a fun story before bedtime, while your teen may enjoy listening to his or her favorite music to set the stage for a good night's rest.

During the summer months and beyond, it's important to establish a fun, relaxing, and, most important, a regular bedtime routine to ensure your children get adequate and quality sleep.

To learn more about the importance of sleep health for your child, visit the NHLBI's website, [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov). And to learn more about how NIH research is shedding light on how sleep and lack of sleep affect the human body, check out this new sleep infographic, at [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/news/spotlight/fact-sheet/sleep-disorders-insufficient-sleep-improving-health-through-research.html](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/news/spotlight/fact-sheet/sleep-disorders-insufficient-sleep-improving-health-through-research.html).