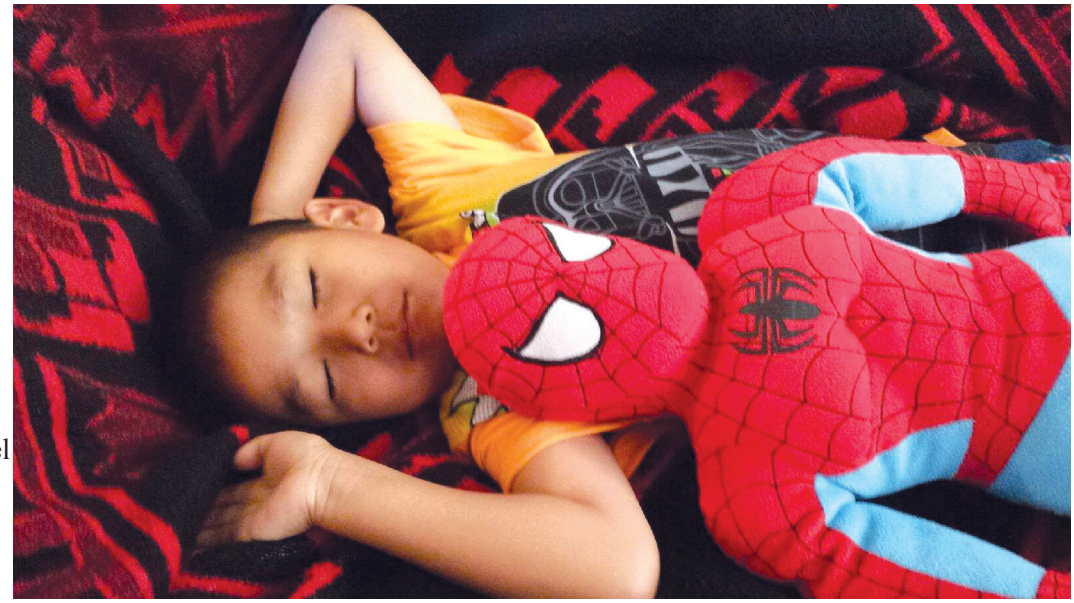
You Can Help Your Child Get Enough Sleep and Be Calmer, Happier, and Healthier

Want your child to feel super? Getting enough sleep may help.



Do you ever feel grouchy because you didn't get enough sleep? Children feel the same way. But if they are babies, infants, or very young, they aren't able to say, "I'm grouchy because I didn't get enough sleep." Instead they may be fussy, cry more, have mood swings, and have a hard time controlling themselves.

Older children may have a hard time getting along with schoolmates. They may find it harder to pay attention in class. It may be harder for them to think, remember information, solve problems, and learn.

You can help them get enough sleep to feel better and do better, at home and at school. Enough sleep will also help them be healthier. It may help them reduce their risk for obesity and diabetes.

Here is how much sleep children should get, including naps:

- **Newborns:** 16-18 hours a day
- **Toddlers:** 12-14 hours a day
- **Preschool Age Children:** 11-12 hours a day
- **School Age Children:** At least 10 hours a day
- **Teens:** 9-10 hours a day

The previous list is the average amount of sleep for each age group. Some children may need more sleep. Some may need a little less. If your child does some of the following, he/she may need more sleep:

- Acts sleepy or tired at times during the day.
- Has a hard time concentrating in school.
- Seems very emotional, aggressive, or hyperactive.
- Has mood swings or seems sad.

Children of all ages benefit from a regular bedtime. Younger children can also benefit when you do the following:

- Do the same thing every night to get your child ready to sleep. Give a bath. Brush teeth. Sing a song. Read a story.
- Don't give them food or drinks that contain caffeine for at least 6 hours before bedtime.
- Don't feed them a heavy meal close to bedtime.
- Set the bedroom temperature so that it's comfortable, not too warm and not too cold.
- Have bedtime be enjoyable and positive. Make it a time for cuddling and sleeping.
- Make sure the bedroom is mostly dark and quiet, without televisions, bright lights, or noise.
- Be firm about them going to sleep. Let them know that bedtime is for lying in bed and falling asleep.

By taking these steps, you will be helping your child get enough sleep. You will help him/her develop good sleeping habits. Your child will be able to be calmer and have a happier day.

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