



Children's Sleep Requirements

Signs of Insufficient Sleep

- Falls asleep in the car, in a highchair or while watching T.V. when it is not nap time.
- Frequently awakens tired and crabby in the morning and following naps.
- Seems irritable, difficult to please off and on during the day, especially between 4 and 6 p.m. (May hit, spit or bite during this time if significantly sleep deprived).
- Appears unusually clingy and will not let mom out of sight intermittently during the day, especially between 4 and 6 p.m.
- Has to be awakened most mornings and looks as if he/she could easily sleep another hour.
- Often has a very short attention span: can't sit to look at books with parent for more than a few minutes (When sleep loss is severe, appears overactive or "wired").

Age	Average Total Sleep Time per Day (in hours)
0 - 6 months	14 - 16
6 - 12 months	14
1 year	13½
2 years	13
3 years	12½
4 years	11½ - 12
5 - 6 years	11
7 - 8 years	10½
9 - 11 years	10
12 - 14 years	9½
15 - 24 years	9
25 and older	7½ - 8½

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Important Facts About Sleep and Young Children

- The goal of improving sleep is to promote optimal alertness.
- All children awaken during the night. The phrase “sleeping through the night” refers to children who experience normal awakenings then return to sleep quickly, on their own, often without a parent’s awareness.
- A child who is overtired has a harder time falling asleep than a child who is well-rested.
- The timing of sleep is often crucial. Putting a child to bed too early or too late may result in a significant delay in falling asleep. The right time can be determined by knowing your child’s circadian rhythm (biological clock) of alertness and sleepiness.
- The rising time each morning is the best behavioral indicator of a particular child’s sleep/wake rhythm. Keeping a regular schedule strengthens circadian rhythm, which in turn promotes quality sleep.
- Sleep loss is cumulative. A child who goes to bed a little late each evening or misses a nap intermittently may become significantly sleep deprived within a few days.
- The majority of children under age 4 years can only meet their sleep requirement by taking naps (they usually cannot obtain all their sleep at night).
- The symptoms of chronic insufficient sleep in the young child are often subtle and misleading. For example, he or she may appear overactive rather than tired and sleepy.
- Chronic and cumulative sleep loss, even for brief durations, is likely to be harmful to learning.
- Children develop attitudes about nutrition and exercise at a young age. The same holds true for sleep. Sending a child to bed as punishment or allowing a late bedtime as a reward may send the wrong message.