

All About Children Pediatric Partners, PC

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Help your child achieve in school!

Healthy Sleep Habits

Older children and teenagers need at least 8 hours of sleep at night. Younger school age children often need 10 or more hours of sleep. Children, who are resistant to go to sleep at night, may experience fatigue and decreased school performance the next day.

Parents can encourage healthy sleep habits by enforcing a routine schedule that includes a “cooling-down” period in the evening from 7 pm on. This period should **not** include watching any electronic media. Reading books, doing homework, quiet board games, a bath, and talking about the day’s events and feelings are all conducive to preparing for sleep. Be careful that adults are not watching programs which might contain scary content for children.

Set reasonable goals for bedtime. If your child unable to fall asleep at an appropriate time, have them engage in quiet activities such as reading, in their bed until they do feel sleepy.

Extra-curricular activities

Extra-curricular activities are an excellent way for children to explore interests, stay active, and meet new friends. These activities may include sports activities, music, dance, scouting, theatre, art, gymnastics, horseback riding, gardening, school clubs, faith based activities, and others both in school and out. Teenagers involved in extra-curricular activities are less likely to abuse drugs. Children involved in extra-curricular activities are less likely to become obese. Even non-sports related activities will encourage children to get off the couch, and away from the television and computer. Be imaginative and follow your **child’s** interests. Pushing children into activities that interest the parents may create resentment from both parties. It is also important to realize your own child’s limitations. Not every child can be an Olympic quality athlete, or a Broadway-bound singer... but any child can enjoy these activities on some level. It is important not to over-involve your children. However, some children do need encouragement – give them choices and limited time to decide. This helps them learn how to make decisions for themselves. Remember... school work should be a priority ALWAYS.

Homework

After an appropriate break when they arrive home from school, set a time for homework to be accomplished. Children should accomplish their homework in time to be in bed at their normal bedtime so that they can be fresh and ready to learn in school the next day. If your child is having difficulty, consult their teacher or us.

School avoidance/anxiety

Many children experience stress and anxiety related to school attendance. Often these anxieties manifest themselves as school avoidance. School avoidance can take many forms... from outright refusal to attend to more subtle and unintentional complaints of headache or bellyache. These symptoms are very real to the child... anxiety will produce a bellyache, and even vomiting, just as it does in adults who are nervous about something stressful. The child is not always intentionally trying to avoid school, but is merely experiencing symptoms of anxiety related to school attendance. Often these symptoms do not appear on weekends or holidays, or get better as the day progresses and school finishes. It is important to acknowledge these symptoms and not discount them... often children will find some relief with gentle encouragement. If the symptoms are not severe, the child should be sent to school, because that may help them eventually overcome their anxiety. Of course, the school or teacher should be consulted to address any specific reasons for school anxiety that might be easily remedied. Children are not always conscious of specific anxieties, or may not be willing to acknowledge ones that are present. But the teacher may be aware of a school bully, or witness anxiety related to a specific class. If your child’s symptoms persist or become particularly severe, consult us for additional advice.