

Now is the Time to Get Sleep Schedules Ready for School

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DENVER — Although children may not be ready to start thinking about the upcoming school year, parents should begin now to reset their child's sleep schedule. During the summer break many children go to bed later and wake-up later than they do during the school year. But those early morning wake times are right around the corner.

Lisa Meltzer, PhD, pediatric sleep expert at National Jewish Health recommends that at least two weeks prior to the start of the school year parents should help their children return to a sleep schedule appropriate for early school start times.

"The weeks leading up to the beginning of school is the time to work with your child; getting them back into regular sleep schedules," said Dr. Meltzer. "Each night move your child's bedtime earlier by about 15 minutes, and wake them up about 15 minutes earlier every morning. This will make sure that when school starts they are able to get the amount of sleep they need to wake up feeling refreshed and ready to start the day."

The quicker children can readjust to the school sleep schedule, the easier it will be for them to be alert and learn during the day.

Dr. Meltzer and the National Sleep Foundation offer the following back-to-school sleep tips:

Make sleep a priority. That means that everyone in the house should follow the rules of sleep hygiene (consistent sleep schedules, relaxing bedtime routine, no technology in the bedroom, etc.). With the start of the school year, this is especially important as the transition from late nights and sleeping in to early bedtimes and early rise times can be extremely difficult.

Have a relaxing bedtime routine. At least 30 minutes before bedtime, turn off all electronics and allow your child time to wind down. A consistent bedtime routine should include relaxing activities, such as a bath and a bed-time story (for young children) or reading time (for older children).

Create a proper sleeping environment. Bedrooms should be cool, dark, and comfortable.

Get technology out of the bedroom. Computers, televisions, video games, and cell phones should be removed from your child's room and set up in a different location.

Have a consistent sleep schedule. Bedtimes and wake times should not vary by more than an hour on the weekends. Don't use the weekend to play catch-up on sleep. Once a schedule is established, stick with it.

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Media Contacts

Our team is available to arrange interviews, discuss events and story ideas.

Jessica Berry
303.398.1082
berryj@njhealth.org

Sean Andersen-Vie
303.398.1002
andersenvies@njhealth.org