

Franklin Township Community School Corporation

Mental Health Minute, December 2018

Children and Sleep

Sufficient sleep is vital for children's healthy growth and development. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, along with other key stakeholders including Harvard University Medical School, came together in 2016 to create a consensus on how much sleep school-aged children need each night. These are the recommendations:

- Ages 3-5 years: 10-13 hours of sleep (including naps)
- Ages 6-12 years: 9-12 hours of sleep
- Ages 13-18 years: 8-10 hours of sleep

Are your children getting enough sleep? American children are notoriously sleep deprived. Perhaps because they are overscheduled with sports, extracurricular activities, and homework. Perhaps because they spend too much time on gaming and electronic devices. Quite possibly, it is a combination of the two.

Insufficient sleep can cause a variety of undesirable side effects in children such as hyperactive behavior, oppositional behavior, and mood swings. Other signs of sleep deprivation can include inattentiveness, inconsistent school performance, delayed response times, emotional dysregulation, and short-term memory loss. These symptoms of fatigue may be wrongly diagnosed as learning problems or mental health issues such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and depression.

The best way for parents to help their children get enough sleep is to:

- Maintain a consistent bedtime each night that allows for the proper amount of sleep.
- Ensure children engage in regular physical activity, which helps them fall asleep faster, spend more time in deep sleep, and awaken less often during the night.
- Avoid consuming caffeinated beverages for several hours prior to bedtime.
- Avoid having televisions, gaming devices, mobile phones, tablets, and other electronic devices in children's bedrooms, which distract them from sleeping well.
- Establish a "wind down" routine 30 to 60 minutes before bedtime that may include powering down electronics, dimming lights, taking a shower or bath, brushing teeth, and reading.
- Create a sleeping space that is dark, cool, and quiet. Consider using a small fan or sound machine that creates enough "white noise" so children can sleep through any household noises.

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Resources: American Academy of Pediatrics; American Academy of Sleep Medicine; National Sleep Foundation