

Wellness tips are being provided by Deb Chappell, Virginia Cooperative Extension, as a means to increase nutrition education for our students and parents as encouraged in the Governor's Scorecard initiative.



Make Time for Sleep

Simple things that you can do to support your child's health, well-being and success in school

Most children do not get enough sleep to be at their best. Sleep is a time for bodies and minds to revitalize, rejuvenate, and process and store information. It is essential to a child's health, growth and academic success. Sleep promotes alertness, memory and performance. Children who get enough sleep are more likely to function better and are less prone to behavior problems.

Children require different amount of sleep depending on their age (teens are usually the worst offenders of sleep deficits). Do you think that your child is getting enough sleep? On average, children get less sleep than is recommended. Check this out:

- 3-5 year olds need between 11-13 hours; the average child gets 10.4
- 5-12 year olds need 10-11 hours but usually are lucky to get 9.5 hours.
- Teens need between 8.5-9.5 hours but usually only get 6-8
- *And in case you were wondering about yourself* - Adults need 7-9 hours of sleep but often only get 5-7 hours.

Getting children to go to bed and getting them up in the morning are two of the biggest challenges for parents. How do you calculate what time your child should go to sleep? First, figure out when the child needs to get up in order to get ready for school, including eating breakfast. Then count backwards the number of hours the child needs to sleep, to come up with a bedtime. Example for a 10 year old: Leave the house for school by 7:30am, get up by 6:30am, to get 10 hours of sleep, would need to go to sleep by 8:30pm, start getting ready for bed by 8pm.

Here are some ideas that you can use to help your child get more rest:

- Have a bedtime routine and make the bedtime consistent.
- Make sure the bedroom is quiet, cool and dark.
- Keep TV, computers and electronic devices out of the bedroom.
- Be sure your child avoids caffeine, especially in the afternoon and evening.

Talk about sleep with your child, come up with a plan to make bedtime positive and relaxing. Be consistent and firm, give it some time and see the difference. Make sleeping a priority for the whole family.