



Making Going to Sleep a Family Priority

Americans of all ages are not sleeping well. Latest surveys and statistics show that as a nation, many of us have trouble going to sleep at night and staying awake during the day.

The consequences on our health, overall wellness, jobs, families, relationships, and public and personal safety due to lack of sleep are significant. Healthy sleeping is as important as healthy eating on a daily basis. Adults, teens, children, and infants all need to be able to get proper rest in order to have the necessary physical and mental capabilities to be effective throughout the day. Without sleep, all of us get grumpy and compromise our abilities to communicate, concentrate, think, and make informed decisions.

How well does everyone in your family sleep? Healthy sleeping is critical to infants, children, and teens. Normal growth and development for children is dependent upon sleep as an essential part of a daily routine. Families with children of all ages need to take the time to assess sleep behaviors as a major factor that can influence the quality of family, personal and professional relationships, parent effectiveness, school or job performance, and overall health. Dr. Deborah Givan, Medical Director for Riley Hospital's Sleep Lab, stresses that "without proper sleep, none of us at any age gives our bodies the chance to rest and renew for the next day." Dr. Givan encourages families to take these steps toward developing and maintaining a regular sleep schedule:

Sleeping Areas:

- Remove all elements of distraction from the sleeping area that could interfere with falling

to sleep, such as telephones, cell phones, radios, television, VCRs, exercise equipment.

- Keep the bed as a place for sleeping only. Activities such as eating, reading, and studying can be done in other rooms or in a bedroom at a desk or in a chair at bedside.
- Make sleep areas restful and comfortable places. Individualize sleeping areas for children to reflect their interests through colors, room objects, and background music.

Behavior Changes:

- Stop use of caffeine products at least four hours before bedtime. Substitute juices, waters, and caffeine-free drinks for evening meals.
- Maintain a regular schedule of balanced meals and snacks for children so they are eating on a routine basis, and not before going to bed.
- Establish and maintain a regular bedtime and wake up time for weekdays and weekends. Balance schedules for you and your child so that adequate time is allowed for downtime and sleep time.
- Introduce calming, soothing activities such as music or reading 15-30 minutes ahead of time before going to bed.

Help your children to develop and maintain healthy and safe habits for sleeping well and on a regular basis. Remember -- how well your child sleeps plays a major role in shaping the quality of your child's life and interactions with others each day.

For more information about safe and healthy sleeping for your family, contact Riley Hospital's Community Education Department at 317-274-2964 or visit www.rileyforkids.org.