

Why sleep is important

Every function in the body is affected by sleep. And for a child, the risks of sleep deprivation are much more serious than simply waking up in a grumpy mood. Research shows that children with sleep disturbances have more medical problems – such as allergies, ear infections, and hearing problems. They are also more likely to have social and emotional problems. Sleep is as important as nutrition and exercise. It's when the body repackages neurotransmitters, chemicals that enable brain cells to communicate.

1. Sleep promotes growth – Growth hormone is primarily secreted during deep sleep.
2. Sleep helps the heart.
3. Sleep affects weight – There's increasing evidence that getting too little sleep causes kids to become overweight, starting in infancy.
4. Sleep helps beat germs – During sleep, children (and adults) also produce proteins known as cytokines, which the body relies on to fight infection, illness, and stress.
5. Sleep reduces injury risk – Kids are clumsier and more impulsive when they don't get enough sleep, setting them up for accidents.
6. Sleep increases kids' attention span – Children who consistently sleep fewer than ten hours a night before age 3 are three times more likely to have hyperactivity and impulsivity problems by age 6.
7. Sleep boosts learning – Sleep aids learning in kids of all ages, and education experts are finding that naps have a particular magic.

The simple fact is that kids sleep less today than they used to. And unless we make an effort to get that sleep time back, their health will suffer.

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