

NEWS ARTICLE

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August 23, 2021

IS LACK OF SLEEP CAUSING CLASSROOM PROBLEMS?

School has been in session for one week. You and your children are adjusting to a different schedule from your summer routine. It can be hard getting up earlier and having to go to bed earlier, but did you know lack of sleep is directly related to health? Constant colds, low energy, irritability – it's possible these are symptoms your child is not getting enough sleep.

Sleeplessness isn't an uncommon problem among children, though the causes do vary. According to research, 69 percent of children experience one or more sleep problems several times a week.

Most children need a minimum of nine hours of sleep a night. Children between the ages of 6-9 need about 10 hours of sleep. Preteens need more than nine hours a night. Teens need a minimum of 9 hours or more a night. Why? Children grow at a fast rate and use lots of energy. Sleep helps the body recover from a busy day and be ready for the next day's activities.

Symptoms of sleeplessness in children are similar to those experienced by adults. They include the inability to stay focused, lack of energy, being less able to fight disease, anxiety, mood changes and irritability. Some tips for helping children sleep through the night include:

- Keep a regular bedtime routine. This means going to bed at the same time and getting up at the same time. A bedtime routine helps get your body ready for sleep. Taking a bath and reading all signal it's time for bed!

- Avoid having large meals close to bedtime. Allow time for food to begin the digestive process. Going to bed on an overfilled tummy causes digestive issues which can keep you awake.
- Wind down. Be sure any after-dinner and after-homework playtime is relaxing, not hyperactive. Watching high drama television right before bed can keep you awake. Listening to soothing music can help you or your child relax.
- Don't serve caffeinated beverages, including iced tea, hot cocoa, and soft drinks, close to bedtime. It is recommended to avoid these drinks within six hours of bedtime.
- Avoid distractions in the bedroom after "lights out". Televisions, computer games, cell phones, and even reading can keep a child awake long past the time they need to be asleep. Confine these distractions to pre-bedtime hours.

Keep in mind that what works for one child, may not work for all. Each child has an individual routine and sleep patterns. Some are "out" as soon as their head hits the pillow. Others need that downtime to ease into sleep. Find what works best for your child and help them develop good sleep habits which they can carry into adulthood.

For more information on strategies for staying healthy, contact the Howard County Extension Service at 870-845-7517 or visit our office located on the second floor of the courthouse. The Cooperative Extension Service is part of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

Recipe of the Week

Beans are unique foods that can be counted as either a vegetable or protein. With the cost of rising food prices, beans are a great way to save money on main dishes.

Beans and Beef Dish

1-pound lean ground beef

1 large onion, chopped

¼ cup brown sugar

½ cup ketchup

2 tablespoons vinegar

½ teaspoon pepper

1 (15 oz.) can kidney beans or 2 cups cooked

1 (15 oz.) can pork and beans

1 (15 oz.) can great northern beans or 2 cups cooked

Wash hands properly. Set oven to 350 degrees. Brown ground beef and onion over medium heat in a large pan. Drain any visible fat. Add remaining ingredients and stir together.

Pour into a casserole dish.

Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Yield: 8 servings

Nutrition information per serving: 304 calories, 6 g. fat, 441 mg. sodium, 43 g. carbohydrates, 8 g. fiber, 21 g. protein. Good source of potassium.