



Stay Well Rested During Summer

School is coming to an end and summer is just around the corner. Enter the fun days of swimming, summer camps, free days, and FUN! My oldest just finished school and her younger siblings (and mom) are so excited to have her home every day. They are enjoying building with legos, playing pretend, and having pajama days. While we have said goodbye to homework, packing daily lunches, and rushing to get out the door in the morning; there is one thing that is sticking around this summer...our sleep schedule.

I know, I know...I can hear you saying..."but it's summer?!? When I was a kid we stayed up late and played outside and slept until 10 am every day." We all turned out fine, but we live in a much different world today, and we know so much more about how sleep affects children's health. Staying up later and sleeping in later, on a consistent basis, cause several things to happen and impair your child's body systems.

These guidelines will keep your whole family well-rested this summer.

Health

Without quality sleep your body doesn't recharge and repair itself well which affects your immune system. A strong immune system fights off many illnesses, and also keeps stress hormones lower, so a full night's rest is important to keep your body healthy. Additionally, with quality sleep your child's mood is better, and your child is able to make better decisions.

Cognitive Ability

Remember all those great things your child learned this year...how to read, math facts, ways to show empathy to others, and skills they will need for next year? In order to retain those skills/knowledge, as well as build on it this summer, sleep is key. With proper sleep, memory and the ability to pay attention improve, helping your child be at their best.

Junk Sleep

Staying up late or missing a nap reduces the amount of high quality sleep, and results in “junk sleep”. “Junk sleep” restores your body the same way that “junk food” does. Junk food may fill your stomach, but doesn’t provide the energy and nutrients needed to function well, and “junk sleep” does the same thing. During “junk sleep” the body is not restored, and the natural sleep rhythm (circadian rhythm) is disrupted. Your child may be getting sleep, but the quality is lower.

How can you find a balance?

Consistency

Have a set sleep routine and schedule. A sleep routine tells the brain to prepare for sleep, and allows the body to begin relaxing for sleep. A consistent schedule, meaning the same wake time in the morning and bedtime at night, helps your child (and you) fall asleep easier. For those special days, such as holidays and vacations, a bit of flexibility goes a long way.

80/20 Rule

Since consistency is so important, following the [80/20 rule](#) is helpful. A consistent schedule is the norm and happen at least 80 percent of the time. The other 20 percent of the time, some flexibility in the sleep schedule can occur. Later bedtimes or missed naps are a special treat and are then followed over the next day or two with consistency again. Balance the “off-schedule” days with the consistent days to maintain that balance.

Vacations

Summer [vacations](#) include challenges with balancing all of the fun with necessary sleep. For our family, we alternate “off-schedule” and consistent days to help us plan ahead and keep the kids well-rested. This makes the vacation more enjoyable for us, as the kids have a great time and we avoid the tantrums or extra silliness they exhibit when [overtired](#).

What fun activities do you have planned for the summer?

Julia Walsh is a mother of two, and a Certified Sleep Consultant with Good Night Sleep Site North Carolina. She has taught preschool for 8 years, and has a degree in Child Development. When she’s not playing with Legos and dolls or baking yummy treats with her children, she helps families overcome their sleep challenges. You can contact Julia at www.goodnightsleepsite.com/northcarolina or julia@goodnightsleepsite.com.

Follow Julia on [Facebook](#) (Good Night Sleep Site North Carolina) and [Twitter](#) (@GoodNightNC) for daily sleep tips and advice.

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PO BOX 2301
Greenville, SC 29602

