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## February 2015

The long days of winter are upon us. The cold, cloudy sky may have you ready to settle in for a long winter's nap. But does a long restful nap for your infant, your toddler--or better yet a good night's sleep for yourself sound more like a fairy tale from that book you read through heavily lidded eyes every night? This month's newsletter focuses on ways to have your whole family slumbering soundly.

### Sleep Like A Baby



"Sleep like a baby". Really? Surely the persons who coined that phrase were never parents, up hours on end trying to soothe a newborn, teething infant or cranky toddler. Night

waking and other sleep issues are among the most talked about topics during pediatric visits. Books on sleep strategies for infants and children cram both the virtual and physical bookshelves. [Continue Reading](#)

### Routine, Routine, Routine

As your child grows from infancy to toddlerhood, sleep environment and sleep routines gain increasing importance. Toddlers and school aged children depend on routine. In addition, these routines have the added benefit of helping them learn



9:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

#### Bell Creek Location

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8:30 A.M. - 6:30 P.M.

Friday

8:30 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.

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## Sleep Like A Baby (cont.)

The first acknowledgement that must be made is the fact that babies sleep differently than adults. Newborns under four months of age spend over half their sleep time in REM sleep, compared with the 25% that REM sleep comprises in the adult cycle. As a result, newborns are noisy and move around at night. Their sleep cycles are shorter, 60 minutes versus the 90 minute adult cycle. This means that once per hour, they come to a 'partial awakening' and may whine or cry out briefly when this occurs. Finally, newborns sleep about 16 to 18 hours per day---in 4 hour stretches!

What does this mean to you in the middle of the night? First, remember that your infant will move around a lot at night and make noises frequently. That doesn't mean that your little darling is awake. Wait briefly before responding to your infant's stirrings. He or she may reasonably go back to sleep after a brief awakening. However, routinely don't let your newborn sleep more than 4 hours at a stretch, during the day or at night. Remember that your infant's nutritional needs are high at this critical point in his or her growth and development. Newborns simply need to eat at least every four hours. During the day, waking your infant after

independence through repetition.

[Continue Reading](#)

## Teenage Zombies

Twens and teens are often the worst sleepers in the family. This may sound counter-intuitive when you are begging your teenager to get out of bed on school mornings or walking past your still



snoozing teen at 10 AM on the weekend. However, this age group frequently suffers from insufficient amounts of quality sleep. Sleep is important, no question. Sleep deprived teens are often irritable, have trouble relating to peers, and are at high risk for depression and anxiety.

They may have lower school performance and problems with memory and decision making, which may lead to risk taking behaviors. [Continue Reading](#)

three hours may help to combat 'day-night' confusion. Combat your own sleepiness during this brief period in your child's life by keeping your own life simple. Sleep when your infant sleeps. Keep dinners simple and household chores to a minimum.

By four to six months, many infants will begin to need less sleep, and to sleep in longer stretches. However, their sleep patterns still are far from comparable to an adult's sleep patterns. They still may wake briefly during the night and it is often at this time that they have more difficulty transitioning to sleep.

Helping your child transition to sleep is a fundamental parenting task. We will discuss further good bedtime routines below. However, in infancy, it is important that your infant begin to fall asleep on his or her own. Put your baby to bed when he or she is drowsy, but BEFORE your child is completely asleep. Avoid the temptation to 'feed them to sleep' with a breast or bottle. When your child wakes at night, walk (don't rush!) to your infant and make the interaction as brief and as boring as you can. Again, wait until your child has been awake for a few minutes before responding. When you first respond, resist turning on the light or picking up your child. Change the diaper or feed as calmly, quickly and quietly as possible. Settle your child back down and leave again, before your child is asleep.

Infants are often easily overstimulated and have a hard time self-soothing. Strategies that calm your newborn may help them sleep. Swaddling an infant under 4 months, sucking, swaying and singing are all good strategies to help your infant relax. Avoid making things worse and contributing to the overstimulation by working too hard and stressing yourself out in the process. Sometimes just rocking and holding your infant in a quiet, dark room is enough to do the trick.

Follow these steps right from the start, remember that this is a brief time in your child's life and make sure you are taking good care of yourself and you will all be slumbering peacefully soon!

### **Routine, Routine, Routine (cont.)**

When establishing a bedtime routine, make sure that it is easy, enforceable and perhaps even portable (meaning it can be used on vacation and at grandma's house as well as at home). The American Academy of Pediatrics recommended a "4 B's" approach—bath, brush, book, bed. This routine emphasizes a brief bath or shower, brushing hair and teeth, then a short book shared before lights out. Add in a 'b' for bathroom break for the older child, and you have a routine. Anyone who has negotiated 'one more story' or 'one more drink' might also include a 'B' for brevity. A routine should encompass 30 minutes at most. Set up a shelf of short 'bedtime only' books, have fixed choices of stuffed animals for sleeping companions, and most importantly, be consistent and do not negotiate.

As with teens and older children, limit toddler and preschooler screen time before bedtime. Even if your child is sitting quietly on the couch with the teddy bear while watching that 30 minute program, the brain activity and eye movements while watching television or other screens cue the body to 'stay awake' rather than calm it down. The same is true for other forms of electronic media. Televisions and computers have no place in a sleeping environment.

Cool, calm and quiet are good rules for a sleeping environment. However, work with your child to ensure a comfortable and safe sleeping environment. Allow some input such as "nightlight on or off?" "door shut or cracked?" "teddy or dolly?". Allowing your child some autonomy both makes him feel a bit more 'in charge' plus fosters the idea that he has the tools he needs to sleep comfortably through the night. If at all possible, have your child nap and sleep in the same place. This ensures she associates 'her' bed as comfortable and the place to rest.

Reassure your child at night, but resist lying down with your child, or even staying in the room until he or she is completely asleep. The goal is to enable your child to get to sleep peacefully on his or her own, both at the beginning of the night and should they wake. Your presence as they fall asleep initially may mean it is harder to get back to sleep alone later in the night. Let your child know that you are nearby, and that you will check back with them later on that evening.

Remember to pause when you hear the call from your child's room. You do not necessarily need to return to your child's room every time he calls out. Call back that you are there and remind him it is time to go to sleep. If you do respond by checking in on her, remember the 'brief and boring' rule you practiced when she was an infant.

If your little darling decides that he or she must check on YOU after being put to bed, calmly place the child back into bed, with as few words and little emotion as possible. Do the same if he or she returns out of the room again. Be consistent, be firm (but not stern) and calm. Your message should be clear "It is now bedtime". If very young children continue to come out of the room, you may consider installing in the doorway a baby gate that is

tall enough to prevent climbing over. This will enable your child to hear and see you, but keeps the child safely in his or her room.

Bad dreams and nightmares are often common in the second half of the night for children three years old or older. These may happen more often if your child has been particularly active or busy, or if routine is disrupted (late to bed or skipped a nap, for instance). If you wake to your child crying out, try to comfort and reassure them. Remember, children may cry out in the night without being fully awake. This may make it appear that your child is 'disoriented' and unaware of you or the surroundings. This is often more frightening for parents than children. Stay calm and stay nearby your child, but allow him or her to wake on their own. If your child wakes with bad dreams with increasing regularity or severity, contact our office for other ideas on how to help.

If your child expresses fears or concerns over going to bed or over a bad dream, be reassuring but empowering. Often it is difficult to convince a preschooler who has been pretending all day about princesses and knights, that there is, in fact, no monster in the closet. Imagination makes things quite real to children. Instead, reassure your child that he or she has all the tools they need to sleep safely and quietly at night; mom or dad nearby, a favorite stuffed animal, cozy blanket or nightlight. Express your confidence in your child: "You are safe and you are loved and you will sleep well" is a good message to deliver.

With your patience, with routine and reinforcement, you will enable your child to get to sleep easily, sleep peacefully through the night and awaken ready for another day of fun with you! There are so many facets to sleep, it would be impossible to explore them all in one newsletter. Please call our office for more guidance, if needed. Sweet dreams!

## Teenage Zombies (cont.)

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that teen get between 8.5 and 9 hours of sleep each night. A poll done by the National Sleep Foundation found that roughly 60 percent of middle schoolers and 87 percent of high school students were getting LESS than that amount on school nights. Interestingly, most parents (90%) believed their children were getting enough sleep.

The factors for poor sleep in teenagers are many. Middle school and high school students are busy people. From extensive homework and projects to a multitude of after-school and evening activities, their schedules are full. In addition, diet and media have substantial implications on the quality and onset of sleep in teenagers. Biologically, there is a shift of an internal clock that occurs after puberty. This shift may result in your teen falling asleep two hours later than your school aged child, but not waking until 2 hours later, as well.

How do you ensure that your teen is able to get the sleep they need while still able to meet the requirements of a busy academic, sports and social life? One important first step is to talk frankly with your teen about the benefits of sleep. Take a moment to sit with your teen and evaluate actual amount of sleep they are getting, and identify the factors that may be keeping them from getting enough sleep.

High school start times have recently been in the news. The AAP strongly endorses middle and high school start time of 830 or later, to encourage teens to get the sleep they need. Increasingly, schools are responding by changing start times for secondary students to later in the morning.

Talk about the importance of good nutrition and exercise, and how they are related to sleep. Increasingly, teens are consuming caffeinated beverages of all types, including coffee based drinks, sodas and energy drinks. Specifically, limit consumption of caffeine containing foods after 2 pm. Maintaining a healthy weight avoids sleep related problems such as snoring and sleep apnea, which can occur in teens as well as adults. Studies show that the more physically active persons are during the day, the easier it is to fall asleep and stay asleep. Be aware that the 'dinner' at 9pm after sports practice and a shower may adversely impact your teen's ability to fall asleep, however. Adjust meals and maybe offer a lighter snack later in the evening.

Specifically, look at the quality of your child's sleep environment. Your teen probably 'lives' in his or her room. Studying, socializing and sometimes snacking feet from where he or she later needs to rest may make falling asleep difficult. Making space separate from your child's room where some of these activities can be completed may be beneficial. This could be as simple as creating a space for your teen to study at a desk, rather than on the bed.

Of course, for teens, electronic media is a leading cause of sleep disturbance. This, too, may be due to several factors. The first concern is that media use directly displaces sleep; your teen is staying up late enjoying video games or text messages with friends instead of sleeping. Additionally, the light emitted from electronic devices has been shown to alter circadian rhythms, directly suppressing the secretion of a sleep inducing hormone. "Unplugging" is critical for teen sleep. One solution is to take the television and computer out of the teenager's room. Have a family 'docking station' where all electronic media including phones, music players and tablets

are plugged in to charge before their owner turns in for the night. Reinforce the use of the 'do not disturb' or 'silence' button on the device to avoid being awakened by the 'ping' of an incoming message. Model this behavior yourself, restricting your own electronic use in the bedroom.

Finally, don't allow your teen to make up for that busy school week by 'sleeping in' until noon on the weekend. This may temporarily help, but is no substitute for regular, quality sleep. Shifting this sleep schedule, even by a few hours, will make it harder to sleep during the week. Encourage your child to sleep in no more than one additional hour over his normal wake time, even on the weekends. This helps preserve his sleep-wake cycle through the week.

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