



Supporting Parents *through* Communication *and* Education

## Are Your Kids Getting the Sleep They Need?

**R**emember grumbling about going to bed around 8:30 p.m. when you were growing up? Fast forward to 2011: What time do YOUR kids go to bed? It might be tempting to answer: but things are different today! Today's kids have SO much more to do – you can't expect them to go to bed when we did! Besides, we didn't really need THAT much sleep did we? Actually, we did – which means that your children require that much sleep, too.

According to the National Sleep Foundation

(NSF), *no* group of children gets as much sleep as they should, although some get closer to the recommended amount of hours than others.

### Consider:

❖ **3-11 months:** Infants get an average of 12.7 hours, when experts recommend 14-15 hours;

❖ **1-3 years:** Toddlers get 11.7 hours, experts recommend 12-14 hours;

❖ **3-5 years:** Preschoolers get 10.4 hours, experts recommend 11-13 hours;

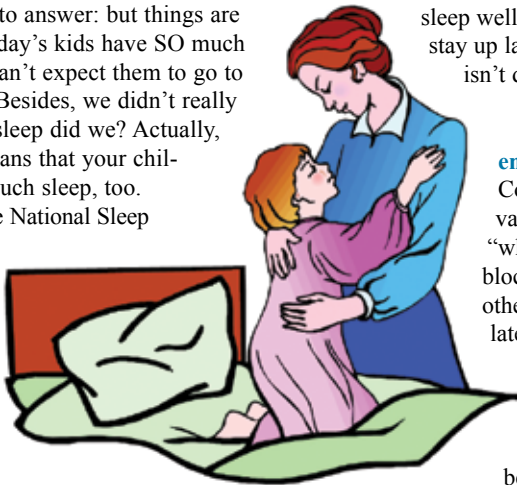
❖ **School-aged children** get 9.5 hours, experts recommend 10-11 hours.

According to the NSF's *Sleep in America* poll, parents often do not identify sleep as an issue that should be addressed. All children are unique, and sleep patterns will vary. However, there are still some general sleep guidelines that parents should have in place in their homes.

❖ **Set a regular bedtime.** Children often complain about having a bedtime that's earlier than their friends' bedtimes. Let them know

that every child is different, and that this is the time when THEY go to bed – period.

Children need to understand that they'll feel better during the day if they sleep well at night. Letting kids stay up later than they should isn't doing them a favor.



### ❖ **Establish a relaxing environment for sleep.**

Consider the use of a vaporizer, fan, or other "white noise" that can block out the distraction of other sounds. It also simulates the sounds babies hear in the womb. Use light to your advantage. Keep lights dim in the evening as bedtime approaches. In the morning, get the child

into bright light. Also, children should not be sent to bed as punishment. The goal is to teach children that bedtime is enjoyable, just like it is for adults.

### ❖ **Cut back on TV at bedtime.**

Televisions and computers have NO place in bedrooms, and caffeine should not be part of a child's diet. TV viewing at bedtime has been linked to poor sleep. Interact with the child at bedtime. Don't let the TV, computer, or video games take your place. Do not give a child medicine that has a stimulant at bedtime. This includes cough medicines and decongestants.

### Summary

There are many benefits to establishing a nightly bedtime routine and consistent sleep schedule for your kids – and the sooner in a child's life that parents start, the better.

*Additional source: American Academy of Sleep Medicine ([www.sleepeducation.com](http://www.sleepeducation.com)).*

# ACTIVITY PLANNER

## Easy Edible Crafts – Part I

A miniature cornucopia would make a great take-home treat for a fall (or Thanksgiving) party or dinner. Make them into place cards by tying on a colored piece of paper and writing each guest's name! Or, have your kids print the names, and this fun craft activity can double as a penmanship lesson!

### Here's what you'll need:

- Fruit-shaped candy;
- Sugar cones;
- Plastic baggie;
- Small piece of ribbon or yarn;
- Knife; and
- Scissors.

### Here's how you make them:

1. With a knife cut the ends off your sugar cones.
2. Fill the corner of the baggie with fruit candy.
3. Put your sugar cone into the corner of the baggie, scooping up some candy as you go. If your cornucopia doesn't look like how you want it, arrange the candy from outside the bag.

4. Tie a ribbon around the baggie at the bottom of the cone. If you want to make these into name cards for a dinner table just cut out a small piece of fall colored paper, write the name, and thread onto the ribbon before you tie it.

If you like these cornucopias, but don't want to eat them or wrap them in a baggie, you can always just glue the fruit into the cone.

5. Regardless how they turn out, you had some fall fun with your kids! ■

Source: *Busy Bee Kids Crafts.com*  
([www.busybeekidscrafts.com](http://www.busybeekidscrafts.com))

## STUDY BUDDY

### Math & Exercise – Part I

"As adults, we don't think about it, but much of our exercise regimens revolve around counting," says Carrie Scheiner, creator of *Exploracise*, an exercise DVD for kids and parents ([www.exploracise.com](http://www.exploracise.com)). "[Too many] children [and adults] are overweight, and 61% of fourth graders are not proficient in math. It just makes sense that we start approaching these




problems in a way that addresses both issues." Scheiner's tips for parents include:


**Count Along** – It's not just about counting to 10 when you touch your toes. There is so much more you can do when your kids are having fun. It can be as simple as having them do the same thing *you* do – sets of 10 repetitions of any exercise – and then have them add up all those 10s when they are done. It will help them get comfortable tabulating simple equations in their heads.

NEXT MONTH: More tips. ■

## SNACK SMART!

### Try these Tips

 Give greater thought to portions. What was once a "large" portion is now more likely labeled "medium." Another way to control portions is to not let get kids get overly hungry. Give them a healthy snack after school rather than making them wait until dinner.

 Don't be afraid to have a few treats. However, keep the portion idea in mind. Limit kids (and yourself for that matter!) to ONE cookie or piece of fudge, not two or three.

Source: *Jodie Farahzad, R.N.*

## BEEHAVIOR MATTERS

### Bedtime Basics

Kids need plenty of sleep to rest their growing bodies and minds. However, for many parents, getting children to go to bed – and stay there – is among the most frustrating behavior problems. The following are some suggestions.

#### Head off Bedtime Woes

❖ *Set a regular bedtime.* Having a consistent bedtime and soothing routine for bed is crucial.

❖ *Allow your child to start winding down, about 30 minutes ahead of bedtime.* This includes turning off the TV, video games, and computer! As much as possible, encourage a

single trip to the bathroom to use the toilet, wash up, and brush his/her teeth.

❖ *Never allow TV, a computer or video games in a bedroom.*

❖ *Remind your child to stay quiet and in bed.* Then, issue a final goodnight.

❖ *Praise the child the next morning for staying in bed.*

#### When a Child Won't Stay in Bed

❖ *Return your child to bed right away.*

Allowing him/her to stay up a while will only delay the inevitable (sleep).

❖ *Sometimes there is a legitimate reason for crying.* Find out what your child is afraid of – night-lights and monster checks can make kids feel safer.

❖ *Wait a few minutes if your child cries or protests.* Then, go back to check on him or her.

❖ *If your child continues to cry or call for you, wait a little longer each time before you go to check.* Again, jumping up immediately should be a last resort – for instance if you suspect an emergency.

❖ *Remind your child that it's time to go to sleep.* Stress that IF your child stays quiet, you'll come back to check on him or her in a few minutes. ■

Source: *KidsHealth.org*. This information is for educational purposes only, and should not be considered a substitute for medical advice.

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