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*Listening, learning,
and living together:
it's the science of life.*

Helping Children Get a Good Night's Rest ¹

Suzanna Smith²

Does your school-aged child complain about being sleepy during the day, doze off in class, or yawn a lot? Does he or she go to bed late, or have trouble falling asleep? If so, your child may not be getting enough sleep.

Health care providers report that elementary school-aged children need at least 9 hours and recommend 10-11 hours of sleep nightly. Sleep affects children's ability to concentrate and learn and impacts their overall physical and mental health. In fact, good sleep is just as important as proper nutrition and daily exercise.

A recent study published in the *Journal of School Health* found that over 60% of students surveyed said they slept too little at least twice a week. They stayed up late when their parents thought they were asleep, and they had trouble falling back asleep after waking up during the night (Armshler & McKenzie, 2005).

Parents can help their children get the sleep they need by creating a healthy sleep environment. Set the room temperature so it is comfortable: not too warm and not too cool. In addition, parents can establish a nighttime routine. Set a regular bedtime and stick to it, and make the time right before bed enjoyable and relaxing, such as with a warm bath

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2. Suzanna Smith, associate professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, University of Florida, and Executive Producer, Family Album Radio, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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and a book. Take distractions such as TVs and computers out of the bedroom, because these interfere with falling and staying asleep.

Bedtime is important and can be a loving time for families. A calm and caring approach to helping your child get a good night's sleep can give them a great head start to each new day.

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To listen to the radio broadcast:

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/sleepneeds.mp3

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/sleepneeds.wav

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