Sleep Time Recommendations: What's Changed?

A new range, "may be appropriate," has been added to acknowledge the individual variability in appropriate sleep durations. The recommendations now define times as either (a) recommended; (b) may be appropriate for some individuals; or (c) not recommended.

The panel revised the recommended sleep ranges for all six children and teen age groups. A summary of the new recommendations includes:

- **Newborns (0-3 months):** Sleep range narrowed to 14-17 hours each day (previously it was 12-18)
- **Infants (4-11 months):** Sleep range widened two hours to 12-15 hours (previously it was 14-15)
- **Toddlers (1-2 years):** Sleep range widened by one hour to 11-14 hours (previously it was 12-14)
- **Preschoolers (3-5):** Sleep range widened by one hour to 10-13 hours (previously it was 11-13)
- **School age children (6-13):** Sleep range widened by one hour to 9-11 hours (previously it was 10-11)
- **Teenagers (14-17):** Sleep range widened by one hour to 8-10 hours (previously it was 8.5-9.5)
- **Younger adults (18-25):** Sleep range is 7-9 hours (new age category)

**Sleep and Newborns (0-3 months)**

For newborns, sleep during the early months occurs around the clock and the sleep-wake cycle interacts with the need to be fed, changed and nurtured. Newborns sleep a total of 10.5 to 18 hours a day on an irregular schedule with periods of one to three hours spent awake. The sleep period may last a few minutes to several hours. During sleep, they are often active, twitching their arms and legs, smiling, sucking and generally appearing restless.

Newborns express their need to sleep in different ways. Some fuss, cry, rub their eyes or indicate this need with individual gestures. It is best to put babies to bed when they are sleepy, but not asleep. They are more likely to fall asleep quickly and eventually learn how to get themselves to sleep. Newborns can be encouraged to sleep less during the day by exposing them to light and noise, and by playing more with them in the daytime. As evening approaches, the environment can be quieter and dimmer with less activity.
**Sleep Tips for Newborns**

- Observe baby's sleep patterns and identify signs of sleepiness.
- Put baby in the crib when drowsy, not asleep.
- Place baby to sleep on his/her back with face and head clear of blankets and other soft items.
- Encourage nighttime sleep.

**Sleep and Infants (4-11 months)**

By six months of age, nighttime feedings are usually not necessary and many infants sleep through the night; 70-80 percent will do so by nine months of age. Infants typically sleep 9-12 hours during the night and take 30 minute to two-hour naps, one to four times a day — fewer as they reach age one.

When infants are put to bed drowsy but not asleep, they are more likely to become "self-soothers" which enables them to fall asleep independently at bedtime and put themselves back to sleep during the night. Those who have become accustomed to parental assistance at bedtime often become "signalers" and cry for their parents to help them return to sleep during the night.

Social and developmental issues can also affect sleep. Secure infants who are attached to their caregiver may have less sleep problems, but some may also be reluctant to give up this engagement for sleep. During the second half of the year, infants may also experience separation anxiety. Illness and increased motor development may also disrupt sleep.

**Sleep Tips for Infants**

- Develop regular daytime and bedtime schedules.
- Create a consistent and enjoyable bedtime routine.
- Establish a regular "sleep friendly" environment.
- Encourage baby to fall asleep independently and to become a "self-soother."

**Sleep and Toddlers (1-2 years)**

Toddlers need about 11-14 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period. When they reach about 18 months of age their naptimes will decrease to once a day lasting about one to three hours. Naps should not occur too close to bedtime as they may delay sleep at night.

Many toddlers experience sleep problems including resisting going to bed and nighttime awakenings. Nighttime fears and nightmares are also common.

Many factors can lead to sleep problems. Toddlers' drive for independence and an increase in their motor, cognitive and social abilities can interfere with sleep. In addition, their ability to get out of bed, separation anxiety, the need for autonomy and the development of the child's imagination can lead to sleep problems. Daytime sleepiness and behavior problems may signal poor sleep or a sleep problem.

**Sleep Tips For Toddlers:**

- Maintain a daily sleep schedule and consistent bedtime routine.
- Make the bedroom environment the same every night and throughout the night.
- Set limits that are consistent, communicated and enforced. Encourage use of a security object such as a blanket or stuffed animal.

**Sleep and Preschoolers (3-5 years)**

Preschoolers typically sleep 11-13 hours each night and most do not nap after five years of age. As with toddlers, difficulty falling asleep and waking up during the night are common. With further development of imagination, preschoolers commonly experience nighttime fears and nightmares. In addition, sleepwalking and sleep terrors peak during preschool years.

**Sleep Tips for Preschoolers**

- Maintain a regular and consistent sleep schedule.
- Have a relaxing bedtime routine that ends in the room where the child sleeps.
- Child should sleep in the same sleeping environment every night, in a room that is cool, quiet and dark — without a TV.

**Sleep and School-aged Children (6-13 years)**

Children aged six to 13 need 9-11 hours of sleep. At the same time, there is an increasing demand on their time from school (e.g., homework), sports and other extracurricular and social activities. In addition, school-aged children become more interested in TV, computers, the media and Internet as well as caffeine products – all of which can lead to difficulty falling asleep, nightmares and disruptions to their sleep. In particular, watching TV close to bedtime has been associated with bedtime resistance, difficulty falling asleep, anxiety around sleep and sleeping fewer hours.

Sleep problems and disorders are prevalent at this age. Poor or inadequate sleep can lead to mood swings, behavioral problems such as ADHD and cognitive problems that impact on their ability to learn in school.

**Sleep Tips for School-aged Children**

- Teach school-aged children about healthy sleep habits.
- Continue to emphasize need for regular and consistent sleep schedule and bedtime routine.
- Make child's bedroom conducive to sleep – dark, cool and quiet.
- Keep TV and computers out of the bedroom.
- Avoid caffeine.