

GROWING UP

Have Summer Night Owls Turn Into School Early Risers

By Dan Florell, Ph.D. & Praveena Salins, M.D.

The house is quiet as 7:00am slowly ticks by. Mom is enjoying her morning cup of coffee as the kids continue to sleep in. The summer morning routine is a leisurely affair rather than the stress-filled, anxiety provoking school year routine. As a result, the whole family is more relaxed and the kids are more amiable. Eventually, Mom goes to the kids' rooms and gently rouses them for breakfast.

While many kids enjoy the summer routine of going to bed late and sleeping in, the new school year will be quickly at hand. This means going back to mornings of early wake up calls and rushing to get everything prepared for the school day. Something that is often forgotten in the lead up to the school year is getting children ready for earlier bedtimes. It can be tempting as parents to let kids go to bed when it starts getting dark outside, but in the summer that can mean going to be bed as late as 9:00pm. That is too late for kids who will have to get up at 6:00am for school.

During summer, a later bedtime is fine as kids can sleep in the following morning. The fact that morning wake up is so flexible is one reason that kids are often in better moods in the summer, they are getting enough sleep. As parents, it can be easy to forget about the amount of sleep that is needed for elementary school-age children. The recommended amount of sleep for kids is 10-11 hours per night. That means a typical child who wakes up at 6:00am for school will need to get to sleep at 8:00pm the previous night at the latest. This can be very difficult to accomplish early in the school year as the sun has yet to set.

The best step to take is to gradually make kids' bedtimes earlier a week or two before school starts. If bed time has crept up to 10pm, start having the kids go to bed 15 minutes earlier each day until you get it to where the kids will have their needed 10-11 hours for school. A typical bedtime routine for kids is to take a bath, put on pajamas, brush teeth, read a story, and go to bed while parents make sure the room is quiet and dark and the child is tucked in. Once the bedtime and bedtime routine has been set, try to keep it the same through the rest of the school year.

Ensuring that your children get enough sleep during the school year can head off a host of problems later on. A lack of sleep can show up in the form of irritability, inattention, tantrums, mood swings, and hyperactivity. Start your child now on getting their needed sleep and have the school year begin on a positive note.

Biography:

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