

Healthy Habits – Sleep

Sleep plays a key role in preventing childhood obesity and maintaining a healthy weight. A lack of sleep can increase the risk of becoming overweight or obese and lead to other behavior issues.

According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, people who report sleeping 5 hours a night are much more likely to become obese than those individuals that get 7-8 hours of sleep per night.

Sleep is food for the brain and our brains are hungry for an adequate amount of rest that can replenish our mental and physical energy. During our sleep our bodies grow and recover from the day's activities.

How much sleep do we need?

- 5 and under – 11 hours
- 5-10 – 10 hours
- 10-18 – 9 hours
- 18 and older – 8 hours

Ways to improve your sleep/get enough sleep

- Add 15 minutes per night until your goal is reached
- Create a bedtime routine – stick to calming activities; avoid tv, computer, electronic games. Brush your teeth, read a book, etc.
- A peaceful environment means better sleep. Keep rooms quiet, dark, and cool and avoid watching tv or playing video games in bed.
- Avoid big meals and/or fried foods before bedtime as they may create stomach issues that can keep you up. Drink plenty of fluids, but stop a few hours before you go to bed so you're not up in the middle of the night visiting the bathroom.

Better sleep = less illness. Along with eating healthy, getting quality sleep helps to keep our immune systems healthy and will lead to fewer illnesses.