



PARENTING POSTS

A newsletter for parents of kindergarten students.

Body Care and Healthy Sleep

Learning to care for themselves and doing well in school include body care and healthy sleep for young children. A variety of things are important for kindergarten children in these areas.

Exercise

Regular physical activity is important for kindergarten children. Children need adequate rest and exercise; otherwise, their bodies cannot absorb and use nutrients in food. Muscle tone and body functions improve with good diet and regular exercise. Even the activity of dressing in full winter gear to go outdoors helps build independence skills, as well as large and small muscles, so let your children practice this important activity by dressing themselves for outdoor play.

Your child needs to work large muscles by walking, running, climbing, pushing and pulling during play. Commit 60 minutes a day to these activities for improved health, attitude and sleep.

Hand Washing and Nail Care

Your child is exposed to a variety of people in a variety of places. Because hand washing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of infections, teach your child how to wash their hands and remind them to wash them every time they come in from outside.

Children learn best by doing. Teach them to establish good habits. Most children love to wash and play with the soap. They just don't remember to do it on their own. Try these tips to keep the hands in your household healthier:

- Teach family members to wash their hands for at least 30 seconds. Practice singing a simple song for 30 seconds while you wash.
- Add more skills by using a clock with a second hand for timing 30 seconds. Talk about minutes and hours too!
- Wet hands and wrists with warm water and lather on the soap, palms first. But remember the back of hands, between fingers and up the wrists, too! Rinse off the bubbles and dry completely.

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Good health habits are taught and modeled by trusted adults. Be sure your child understands how and why these practices, as well as feeling well and doing well in school, are important to your family.

For more information about sleep, sample sleep schedules and solid sleep research, look for Mary Sheedy Kurcinka, author of "Sleepless in America, Misbehaving or Missing Sleep?" on the web at www.parentchildhelp.com

Handwashing and Nail Care (continued)

- Keep a nail brush and file where your child can use them. Teach children to have their fingernails short, clean and moisturized to prevent infection.
- A handmade poster with photos of proper hand washing, posted in the bathroom, is a good visual reminder.
- Change hand towels frequently or use disposable paper towels.

Brush, Flush and Wash

- Use a timer for tooth brushing, too. Include a poster or chart if your child needs reminding.
- Give each child his or her own brush or comb and be sure he or she knows how to use it daily.
- Even if you conserve water at home, teach bathroom etiquette for flushing the toilet and leaving the bathroom tidy for the next user. Typically, kindergarten rooms have one bathroom for all of the children to use.



Stress Less Activity

Stress is part of everyone's life. Even young children! Try this activity with your child to help reduce stress and enjoy time together.

Offer crayons and various sizes of drawing paper to children rather than electronics before bed.

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Bedtime and Sleep Issues

Kindergarten children are more likely to gain healthy sleep and get the rest they need if you pay attention to the following areas:

Routines - What does your child need to do before climbing into bed? Do you offer a snack? Expect them to brush, flush and wash? Find a comfort item? Read together? Whatever your pattern, you can formalize it by making a book or poster with all of the important elements drawn and written out for anyone who will be helping your child get ready for bed.

Timing of sleep - Establish a good pattern for school readiness by waking children a little earlier each morning, moving meals and snacks to match the school schedule and providing time for lots of physical exercise. All of these adjustments and a good night routine will help create earlier bedtimes.

Sleep associations - If your child falls asleep sitting in your lap, in front of the television or with the light on, but wakes in the night and can't fall asleep again without having those same conditions met, they may have a sleep association issue. Help your child learn to fall asleep in their own bed, with the same conditions they will have when they wake naturally in the night. Once established, they will be able to put themselves right back to sleep without interrupting your sleep!

Temperament - Intense children may benefit from a back rub and talk time as part of the nightly routine. Slow-to-warm children need plenty of time to work through their routine. Dimming lights, pulling shades and picking up toys can be a helpful signal that bedtime is coming. Feisty kids have energy. Be sure they have plenty of exercise during the day and a stuffed animal to pet during story time to help unwind their busy bodies. Because these children rarely slow down, determining when they are tired can be difficult. Missing that window where they are sleepy means they may wind up again for another hour or more. Establish a good routine and stick with it!

Keep your sleep routine and timing the same, even on weekends and during special events, for well-rested kids and happier adults.



Go here for more information on this and other topics.

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