

## Sleep More, Weigh Less?



**A lack of sleep can increase a child's risk of being overweight or obese**, according to a study by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. They found that with each additional hour of sleep, the risk of a child being overweight or obese dropped by 9 percent. The results are published in the February 2008 edition of *Obesity*, the journal of The Obesity Society.

"Our analysis shows a clear association between sleep duration and the risk for overweight or obesity in children. The risk declined with more sleep," says Youfa Wang, M.D., Ph.D. Dr. Wang is the senior author of the study and associate professor with the Bloomberg School's Center for Human Nutrition. "Desirable sleep behavior may be an important, low-cost means for preventing childhood obesity and should be considered in future intervention studies."

According to the researchers, the recommended amount of daily sleep varied depending on a child's age. Some research suggests that children younger than age 5 should sleep for 11 hours or more per day. Children age 5 to 10 should sleep for 10 hours or more per day. Kids older than 10 should sleep at least 9 hours per day.

Results showed that children with the least amount of sleep had a 92 percent higher risk of being overweight or obese compared to children who slept longer. For children younger than age 5, the minimum healthy sleep period meant less than 9 hours of sleep per day. For children ages 5 to 10 it meant less than 8 hours of sleep per day and less than 7 hours of sleep per day for children older than 10. The relationship between increased sleep and the reduced risk of obesity was strongly associated with boys, but not girls.

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**QUICK TIP:** A bedtime routine — a bath, putting on pajamas, reading a story, singing, and creating a safe soothing atmosphere — can help your younger child sleep soundly.

## Parents Concerned About Addictions and Disorders

**The C.S. Mott Children's National Poll on Children's Health** asked parents of 11- to 17-year-old kids to rate 18 health-related topics for health care providers to address during an adolescent's routine check-up. Findings were released in January.

The top 10 topics parents consider very important for doctors to discuss with adolescents are: Diet/nutrition, exercise/sports, physical changes of puberty, drug use, tobacco use, sexually transmitted diseases, depression/suicide, obesity, drinking, and eating disorders.

"There is enough variation in parents' opinions based on their child's age, race, and gender that, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach, it makes the most sense to encourage parents to tell their child's doctor what topics they want to have addressed during visits," says Amanda F. Dempsey, M.D., Ph.D., MPH.

She notes that the poll results should offer a great deal of reassurance to parents of adolescents: There are tens of millions of other parents in the country that also want their children's health care providers to discuss many topics — including sensitive topics like depression and puberty — with their adolescent children.

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**QUICK TIP: One size doesn't fit all when addressing the problems of teens.**

## CDC Study Links Cough and Cold Products to Pediatric Emergency Visits

**Approximately 7,000 children ages 11 and younger are treated in hospital emergency departments each year** for reactions to cough and cold medications, according to a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study published in January's *Pediatrics*. About 66 percent of those incidents were due to children taking the medication without a parent's knowledge.

This study found that children ages 2 to 5 accounted for 64 percent of all adverse drug events from cough and cold medications. Nearly 80 percent of those children swallowed the medicine without a parent's supervision. Among all age groups, 93 percent of the children did not require hospital admission; however, one-fourth needed additional treatment to eliminate the medicine from their bodies.

Late last year, drug companies voluntarily pulled 14 over-the-counter medicines marketed to children younger than 2 because of safety concerns.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is currently reviewing the safety of these products for children ages 2 to 11. Parents should not use products intended for older children to treat young children. Caregivers also should keep all medications out of the reach of children. And parents should throw away any cough and cold products still in their home intended for infants and toddlers age 2 and younger.

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**QUICK TIP: Keep ALL medications out of the reach of children.**



## No Clowning Around

**Researchers from the University of Sheffield in England** reported in January that images of clowns frighten children in the hospital rather than comfort them. Penny Curtis, M.D., of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, led the study.

A survey of more than 250 children between the ages of 4 and 16 found that all the kids disliked clowns as part of hospital décor, with even the oldest children finding them scary. The University of Sheffield polled the children for the Space to Care study aimed at improving hospital design for children.

According to Dr. Curtis, who is also senior lecturer at the university,

"As adults, we make assumptions about what works for children. We found that children universally dislike clowns. Some found them frightening and unknowable."

The findings, reported in *Nursing Standard* magazine, highlighted the importance of consulting children — who prefer colorful spaces and references to contemporary culture and environments — when designing or changing hospital décor.

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**QUICK TIP: You might want to reconsider that clown décor for your toddler's bedroom.**