



Back to School Sleep Routine

It's almost Labor Day, and everyone is getting ready for Back to School...getting school supplies and new shoes are top on the list! But, don't forget one of the most important items on your Back to School list: getting back to a **healthy sleep routine** for your whole family so you can avoid the dreaded start-of-school over tiredness.

Your child's body has been set to summer mode: napping when he wants, going to bed later than normal, not getting up at any set time in the morning. Suddenly, when school starts at 8:00 am, the struggle to get up and out of the house *ready and on time* is REAL.

In order to make the transition from lazy summer days to hectic fall routines, try to follow these guidelines for getting your kids and whole family back into a healthy bedtime and sleep routine:

- 1.) Get as much as possible ready the night before:
 - pack lunches
 - get backpacks packed up and leave by the front door
 - have your child choose his outfit the night before and lay it out on his dresser

Making most of your decisions and packing the night before leaves the morning chaos to just getting up, dressed and fed. Everything else has already been done.

- 2.) Get yourself up and ready **before** waking your child; let him sleep as late as possible. In my personal experience, I have found our mornings are much smoother when I am ready to go and can focus all my attention on getting everyone out of the house on time.

Research has shown that children's natural wake times are typically between 6:00 am – 8:00 am when a child has a healthy sleep routine with the appropriate amount of sleep.

Keep in mind that this awake time is determined by your individual child's body, not necessarily what time school starts. Some kids naturally wake earlier and some are naturally later sleepers; try to understand your child's body and do the best you can to accommodate his sleep needs.

3.) After school, institute a mandatory rest time. I'm a firm believer that everyone, even the most social, energetic, and friendly people, need time alone during the day to unwind. It's a time to rest, recuperate, spend time with yourself and your thoughts, and, for kids, it's a good time to practice independence and learn how to slow down and regulate their own bodies. School is overstimulating by nature, so all kids can benefit from an afternoon quiet/rest time (even a nap, for your preschool-aged toddler).

4.) Put your child to bed at an age appropriate time. It's amazing how beneficial this can be to your child's sleep cycles. To help get his body ready for an earlier bedtime, set a tone of relaxation and quiet about 30-60 minutes before bedtime and slow down the tone of your house. Dim the lights, talk in calmer, quieter voices, and most importantly, reduce activity. Electronics, bright lights, and loud activity actually inhibit the body's natural production of melatonin; capitalize on your child's natural bodily cycles and rhythms, rather than actively counteracting them!

In order to figure out the best bedtime for your child, think about the time he needs to wake up in the morning in order to get to school on time. Then, count backwards the number of hours of sleep he needs each night, based on the requirements below:

Ages 3 years and under: 12 - 14 hours of sleep

Ages 3 - 5 years old: 11 - 13 hours of sleep

Ages 5 - 12 years old: 10 - 11 hours of sleep

*Note that these are the minimums of sleep required- if your child needs more, let him sleep!

So, for example, a 4-year-old that needs to wake at 6:30 am for school should have a bedtime of 7:30 pm. And that means that he is **falling asleep** at 7:30pm, not beginning his bedtime routine at 7:30 pm.

Our bodies naturally crave routine and consistency, and have strict requirements on how much rest is truly needed! Children who are constantly overtired and sleep deprived struggle to focus in school, have a harder time regulating their bodies and emotions, have more difficulty retaining the information they learn, and are more likely to have behavioral issues. Set your child up for success in school by ensuring they are getting the rest they need!

While it can be difficult to jump back into a schedule, do your best to be consistent. The more consistent you are, the quicker your child's body will adjust and things will go more smoothly.

Back to School is a great time of the year; thrive in it, don't just survive it! I'd love to hear how these tips help your family get back into your school routine, so connect with me on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#). Sweet Dreams from [Slumberland Solutions!](#)