

[IMAGE]

A Few More Zzz's = A Few Less Lbs?

By Editorial Staff

When does the average child go to bed, and how much sleep do they actually get? That's an increasing source of discussion, not only because of the wide variance in bedtimes / sleep times, but also because of the profound health consequences we're learning are associated with inadequate sleep.

Think about what happens when you go to bed at midnight (or later) and then wake up at 5 a.m. – what are the odds you'll experience a relaxing, refreshing, stress-free day or next day? Now imagine you're a child who (generally) lacks the ability to process that fatigue and channel it in a positive way? One consequence could be weight gain, a risk emphasized by research.

In a recent study, researchers tracked nearly 1,000 children from preschool-age to adolescence, determining when they went to bed at age 4-5 and correlating that data with children's body-mass index (BMI) at age 15. Results were startling: Children who went to bed by 8 p.m. or so as preschoolers were less likely to be obese as teenagers (10 percent obese) compared to children who went to bed between 8-9 p.m. (16 percent obese) or after 9 p.m. (23 percent obese).

sleeping kid - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Researchers speculate that two factors may be important in explaining their findings: 1) Children who go to sleep later may end up getting less overall sleep (particularly because they have fairly set waking times due to school, etc.); and 2) Children who stay up later may be spending more time watching TV, snacking, etc.

How much sleep should your child be getting? [Click here](#) for general guidelines based on age and more information on why ensuring your children – and you – get a good night's sleep is so important to your health.

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