

[IMAGE]

## The Power of Childhood Routines

By Editorial Staff

You may be able to get away with inconsistent sleep and meal routines / times on a regular basis as an adult – although eventually, it will catch up with you, too ... for some sooner than others. But for young children, consistency and structure are even more important, and not just because the habits they learn while young will plant the seeds for their habits throughout life. It may also impact their emotional state – and even contribute to obesity.

Here's the latest study findings, published in the *International Journal of Obesity*: Kids (3-year-olds) who had established routines for bedtime (as well as routines regarding mealtimes and screen time restrictions) were more likely to have better emotional regulation than preschoolers who lacked those routines. And according to study researchers, *both* lack of a regular bedtime and poor ability to regulate emotions increased the risk of becoming obese when older.

Preschoolers participating in the study averaged 2 on a five-point scale assessing emotional regulation. For each 1-point reduction in emotional regulation, the risk of being obese by age 11 jumped 38 percent. And inconsistent bedtimes proved even more damaging in terms of obesity risk: a whopping 87 percent greater likelihood of being obese by age 11 compared with 3-year-olds whose bedtimes were more consistent.

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