

[IMAGE]

Road Map for the Healthy Child

By Editorial Staff

As adults, most people realize how much their childhood experiences, good, bad and everything in between, influenced who they are today. Sometimes the seeds are planted early in life – even during the first few years. Of course, that doesn't mean parents know how to raise their own children the right way, even with the best intentions. Even the best parent needs assistance, guidance – a road map, if you will – to help get their children on course for optimal health and wellness.

Enter the World Health Organization (WHO), an agency of the United Nations devoted to public health. The WHO recently released its very first *Guidelines on Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour and Sleep for Children Under 5 Years of Age*. The guidelines, based on a scientific review of the available research, recommend the following (per day):

Children Younger Than Age 1

- Physical Activity: Active several times a day in a variety of ways, including at least 30 minutes of tummy time
- Screen Time: Not recommended; reading and storytelling by parents encouraged
- Sleep: 14-17 hours, including naps

healthy child - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Children Ages 1-2

- Physical Activity: 180 minutes or more; children should not be restrained (sedentary) for more than one hour at a time
- Screen Time: Not recommended for 1-year-olds; one hour or less for 2-year olds; reading and storytelling by parents encouraged
- Sleep: 11-14 hours, including naps; consistent sleep and wake times

Children Ages 3-4

- Physical Activity: 180 minutes or more, at least 60 of which involve moderate- to vigorous-intensity activity (frequent running, jumping, etc.).
- Screen Time: One hour or less; reading and storytelling by parents encouraged
- Sleep: 10-13 hours, including a nap; consistent sleep and wake times

If you have a young child, how closely are you adhering to the WHO guidelines? If your child is older, did you come close to meeting the guidelines ... or were you not even close? As the body of research supporting the benefits of physical activity, high-quality sleep and limited screen time grows ever-larger, these guidelines are a reminder for parents of young children – and children / adults of all ages – that simple lifestyle behaviors can make a big difference when it comes to health and wellness.

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