

# Raising Great Kids



APRIL

## Children and Sleep

Do you wonder how much sleep is enough for your child? Do you have a 3- or 4-year old who will not go to bed before 11:00 at night? Are you involved in bedtime battles with your children?

Sleep is very important for everyone, no matter the age. A 3- or 5-year old needs about 11 to 12 hours of sleep each day. We all need a certain amount of quiet, dreamless sleep that restores and refreshes us for the day ahead.

Bedtime problems occur with most normal children. Parents can lessen these problems by building healthy sleeping habits in their children from an early age. Preschoolers need to have a routine that is set and monitored by an adult. Some children, if allowed, will stay up as late as they can before going to bed. Children, like adults, function better when they have regular hours for sleeping and waking. When children have to change their routine, they are more likely to have sleep problems. Your job, as a parent, is to provide the place, routine, and atmosphere for sleeping. Your child's job is to fall asleep. Here are few tips to help both you and your child.

- ★ Set aside enough time each evening for the routine. Try to do things in the same way at the same time each day.
- ★ Ease into calm, quiet activities at least an hour before "lights out." This is not the time for rough play, teasing or tickling. Keep the child as peaceable as possible, away from distraction. Try not to have the TV on, no video games or anything that will stimulate him. A warm bath, a soothing snack such as warm milk, cuddling in bed clothes, soft gentle music, and dim lights all set the stage for bedtime. Keep this time as pleasant as possible.
- ★ Give enough warning, about 30 minutes, before the routine begins. This might be a good way to help your preschooler learn about the clock. Show him where the hands will be pointing when it is bedtime. Ten minutes or so before it's time, remind him when bedtime will be. You may want to buy an inexpensive timer to help with this activity.

- ★ Go through the bedtime ritual with your child. This will lessen the possibility that he will think you're trying to get rid of him so you can do something else. Give him something he likes that can help him make the transition. Reassure him that he will be okay and that you are not far away.

- ★ Praise your child's progress. Your preschooler will understand when you tell him how proud you are that he stayed in his bed and didn't cry after his bedtime story.

Try to stick to the time you decide for your child to go to bed. If you give in too often, you are taking away from the consistency your child needs to feel safe. **Z**

Source: *Family Information Services*, January, 2002.

### Safety Scoop

How safe are your kids toys? The following toys should have CAUTIONARY LABELS in addition to the age labels:

- ⌘ Electrically operated toys that also have heating elements.
- ⌘ Science toys that may have toxic chemicals.
- ⌘ Balloons
- ⌘ Any toy intended for assembly by an adult and may have potentially hazardous sharp points and edges in the pre-assembled state. **Z**

Source: *The Manufacturers of America Guide to Toys and Play*.

## Did You Know?

*Did you know that you can get children to listen? Here are a few tips.*

- ★ **Think before you speak.** Don't tell your child it's time to go then take twenty minutes to get ready yourself. If you ask him to pick up his clothes and he doesn't, what will you do? Take a moment to think. Your words will mean much more.
- ★ **Be precise.** Don't suggest what you would like your child to do, e.g., "*It would be nice if you would . . .*" Say your request in a way that he will not misunderstand. For example, "*Please put your shoes on and get in the car.*" Don't give him a choice when there really is none.
- ★ **Control your emotions.** Losing your temper and raising your voice will not get your child to pay attention. He notices your anger instead. Remain calm. Think first, decide what you want to say and let your words convey authority.
- ★ **Get up close and personal.** Children respond better when you face them eye-to-eye. By standing close by, you can tell if your child is paying attention to you. You can see his expression and he can see yours. **Z**

**Q & A** **My child wakes up screaming in the middle of the night. He started having nightmares a few weeks ago. Now he wants to sleep with me because he thinks "lions" are in his room. What should I do so we can both have a good night's sleep?**

It is very common for preschoolers to have nightmares at this age. It is important that you provide physical comfort to your child and recognize his fears. Young children are learning to separate reality from fantasy. Tell your child you understand that he is scared of lions and assure him you have never seen one in your home. Also, what happens during the day may interfere with your child sleeping through the night. If he is ill or growing rapidly, he could also experience more nightmares. A few things you can do to help are:

- ★ Help him feel more in control of scary dreams. You may want to give him a flashlight to turn on when he's feeling afraid.
- ★ Help him think of interesting ways to make the bad dreams go away, e.g., give him an empty spray bottle to fill the room with happy dreams before going to bed.
- ★ Talk about nightmares during the day and avoid reading books about monsters.
- ★ Talk with your doctor if the nightmares get worse or continue for more than a month. **Z**

Source: *Family Information Services, January, 2002.*



### Fruit Soda

- 1 (12 oz) can fruit juice concentrate, thawed (any flavor)
- 1 (32 oz) bottle club soda, unsweetened

Pour juice concentrate into a 2-1/2 quart pitcher and slowly add club soda. Stir gently and serve immediately. **Z**

Source: "Healthy Food for Healthy Kids," Swinney, Bridget, MS, RD, 1999.

### Kids Can Help

Children can bring ingredients, add them to the pitcher and stir.

**All children must be supervised when they are in the kitchen.**



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MR  9/08

