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## The benefits of bedtime

Did you know? The amount of sleep your toddler gets may be linked to his behavior, language development, and future weight.

3 mins read Apr 15, 2024

The benefits of an early bedtime and a regular bedtime sleep routine go far beyond ensuring that your toddler gets enough sleep. Research shows that having a consistent bedtime routine is linked to healthy sleep in young children. For example, toddlers who follow the same routine every night tend to have earlier bedtimes, fall asleep faster, and wake up fewer times in the night. However, the advantages may not stop there.

One recent study showed that following a typical bedtime routine, which may be adapted to suit children's individual needs, can help progress their language, reading, and writing skills, and have a positive impact on the way they manage their emotions. These developmental advancements may, in turn, form stronger parent-child bonds and result in a happier family environment.

### **Long-term effects**

In addition to impacting communication and behavior, a lack of sleep can have physical effects in the longer term. A research study of almost 1000 children explored whether preschool-aged children with earlier bedtimes had a lower risk of obesity in adolescence. The results showed that the young children with early weekday bedtimes (at or before 8pm) were half as likely as those with late bedtimes to be obese as adolescents.

New research, with children aged between three and five years old, examined the impact of bedtime routines. The researchers measured the children's concept of colors, numbers, letters, sizes, and shapes as a way to assess readiness for school. Optimal bedtime routines (which involved consistency, brushing teeth, reading books, and avoiding snacks and drinks before bed) in the preschoolers were linked with higher scores on readiness for school, as well as better dental health. Following a regular bedtime routine at the same time every night—for example giving your toddler a bath, getting him into his pajamas, helping to brush his teeth, and reading a story together—is also linked to improved overall health. So, if you haven't already implemented a bedtime sleep routine, now is the time to do so.

## **Sources**

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