

# Kids need 10 hours of sleep to avoid weight gain

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Parents who let their kids sleep for at least 10 hours will help them avoid weight gain. Picture: Thinkstock

Source: Quest Newspapers

**PARENTS not ensuring their children get at least ten hours sleep during the week are contributing to their kids' bulging waistlines.**

Researchers believe many sleep-deprived youngsters are simply too tired to bother exercising and have more hours in the day to eat than other children. Hormonal imbalances caused by a lack of bed rest can also trick kids into thinking they are hungrier than they really are.

Kids aged between 10 and 12 who sleep for less than seven hours during school nights have 1.99cm wider waistlines and consistently higher body mass indexes than those who sleep more than ten hours, the research shows.

Author Dr Teatske Altenburg, from the EMGO Institute for Health and Care Research in The Netherlands, said playing catch-up with sleep on the weekend was not the best thing for growing bodies.

"We found that weekday sleep duration seems more important in decreasing their risk of being overweight and obese than weekend sleep duration," she said.

"Our results also suggest that longer sleep durations during the weekend might not be suitable to compensate for shortened sleep during the week."

Other research cited in the study found 10-15-year-olds are getting about 30 minutes less sleep than what they were two decades ago.

Woolcock Institute clinical psychologist Dr Amanda Gamble treats underage sleep disorders and said a growing number of cases are caused by technological overload and schoolwork stress.

"Parents can have children switch off their electronic devices an hour before bed and ensure they can't have them in their rooms during bedtime," she said.

"The light emitted from the devices delays the production of sleep hormone melatonin. Lots of primary and high school students are also having disturbed sleep because they are stressed about school work."

Dr Gamble said parents need to determine their child's natural wake up time and subtract up to 11 hours from that to mark the time for lights out.

She says a continuity between school night and weekend sleep times, wherever possible, will help the child's body clock stabilise. The new peer-reviewed research involved 5757 kids across Europe.

It comes as diminishing sleep in adolescents has coincided with ballooning rates of obesity.

In 2008, one in four Australians aged 5-17, or around 600,000 children, were overweight or obese, up four percentage points from 1995.

The obesity rate for children increased from 5-8 per cent during the same period, Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show.

Inconsistent sleep patterns in children and adolescents has also been linked to physical illness, anxiety and depression later in life.

## **HELPING YOUR KIDS HAVE A GOOD NIGHTS' SLEEP**

- Start a relaxation routine 30 minutes before bed. For example: bath, pyjamas, teeth cleaning, book and bed.
- Avoid high-protein snacks right before bed, such as meat and nuts.
- Avoid caffeine.

- Offer a high-carbohydrate snack, such as a piece of toast or some rice.
- Have a one-hour buffer zone between homework and bed.
- No computers, smartphones, tablets or TVs in bedrooms after bedtime.
- Try to make weekday and weekend wake up times similar.

*Source: Woolcock Institute clinical psychologist Dr Amanda Gamble*

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