

# Studies Say Earlier Bedtimes Lead to Smarter, Healthier Kids

Some children need to be snoozing before the sun goes down.

By [Marlisse A. Cepeda](#)

MAY 20, 2016

Children have endless amounts of energy, so getting them to shut down for some shut-eye at a reasonable hour can feel almost impossible sometimes. But while a couple of hours of lost sleep may seem harmless, it may be more detrimental than you think.

Studies show that children's cognitive, emotional and physical development benefits from getting to bed earlier. So what exactly does "earlier" mean? The healthiest bedtime, according to research, is between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m.

Putting your kids to bed before the sun goes down may seem excessive, but even an extra hour of sleep is well worth it. A [2012 \*Pediatrics\* study](#) showed that kids, aged 7 to 11, who went to bed just one hour earlier for five nights a week were more alert and less irritable in school. The advantages are even greater for younger kids; [a recent study](#) of 18-month-old toddlers linked better "motor function, language, and social function" with heading to bed before 10 p.m.

But, that doesn't necessarily mean every kid should be on a 7:30 p.m. sleep deadline. Nap schedules, age, and several other things factor into a child's perfect sleep time. Figuring out what works best for your child will take some trial and error. [In a recent \*Slate\* article](#), where she touts the benefits of "absurdly early bedtimes," mom Melinda Wenner Moyer suggests following pediatrician Marc Weissbluth's technique:

Try putting your kid to bed 20 minutes earlier for a few nights and watch what happens. If he falls asleep easily, then chances are he or she should be going to bed earlier.

What if your work schedule doesn't let you make bedtime adjustments? Weissbluth has some ideas on that, too.

- Prep dinner ahead of time so your kids can eat as soon as you get home and head to bed sooner.
- On especially late nights, pack dinner in the morning so you can feed them on the way home from daycare.

However you manage it, the pros of summoning the Sandman earlier definitely outweigh the cons — even if it's only by 20 minutes.

Resource: <http://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/parenting/news/a38590/kids-bedtime/>