

COUNSELOR'S COMMENTARY

September is here again with the children back in their school desks and our teachers in front of the classrooms. As one walks down the hallways it is such a joy to hear the singing and topical discussions regarding science or math. However, if one would actually take the time and peer into our colorful classrooms we would see what our teachers see especially on Monday mornings. We would notice children rubbing their eyes, heads laying on desks, children acting hyper and /or students who seem to be not concentrating on doing their assignments. Would we begin to wonder what is happening to our children ?

The answer to this question only takes two words ... professionals call it sleep deprivation . Sleep deprivation basically means insufficient amount of sleep. Just as food and water are important for our bodies to function, so is sleep . When this basic need is cut short our bodies and psychological state reacts in some way . Some symptoms children with sleep deprivation experience include:

- * Moodiness and irritability
- * Temper tantrums
- * The tendency to emotionally 'explode' at the slightest provocation
- * Over-activity and hyperactive behaviour
- * Daytime naps
- * Grogginess when they wake up in the morning
- * Reluctance to get out of bed in the morning.

What can cause sleep deprivation in children?

- * **Personal choice** - some people don't realise that the body needs adequate sleep. Instead of regularly going to bed at a reasonable hour, they prefer to stay up late to socialise, watch television or read a good book.
- * **Illness** - illnesses such as colds and tonsillitis can cause snoring, gagging and frequent waking, and have a direct effect on sleep by fragmenting it.
- * **Sleep disorder** - problems such as sleep apnoea, snoring and periodic limb movement disorder can disturb the person's sleep many times during the night.
- * **Medications** - some drugs used to treat disorders such as epilepsy or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can cause insomnia.
- * **The sleeping environment** - sleep may be disrupted for a range of environmental reasons; for example, because the bedroom is too hot or cold, or because of noisy neighbours or a snoring bed partner.
- * **Poor sleep hygiene** - some people's habits are disruptive; for example, drinking caffeine sodas close to bedtime stimulates the nervous system and makes sleep less likely. Another common problem is lying in bed and worrying, rather than relaxing.

* **Babies, older babies and toddlers** - when younger siblings wake up for feeding many times the other siblings do as well.

The following chart taken from the *USA Magazine* indicates what is an appropriate amount of sleep.

| Age | Hours needed |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 0-3 months | 15-17 |
| 3-18 months | 13-15 |
| 18 months to 3 years | 11-13 |
| 4 to 12 | 10 |
| Teens | 8 1/2 to 9 1/2 |
| Adults | 7-9 |

Hopefully, by being more aware about sleep deprivation, its symptoms and how much rest we need we will be able to help our children in their learning process. Maybe even we can help ourselves .

Footnotes:

[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Sleep_deprivation?](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Sleep_deprivation?OpenDocument)

[OpenDocument](#)

www.usaweekend.com/02_issues/021117/021117kidsleep.html#disorders