

## Earlier bedtimes help kids fight obesity

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(HealthDay)—With childhood obesity rates high, many studies have investigated lifestyle factors that can make a difference—which ones increase the risk and which ones reduce it.

Beyond diet, a [lack of sleep](#) has been linked to [weight gain](#) both in adults and children, so it's important that kids get enough shuteye, even with their—and your—busy schedules.

Since a child's wake-up time is usually determined by when school or day care starts and can't be easily altered, an earlier bedtime is needed to ensure kids get the sleep they need, according to research published in *The Journal of Pediatrics*.

After following nearly 1,000 kids from birth to age 15, researchers found that attention to sleep needs to start in the [preschool years](#). For instance, 4-year-olds who went to sleep before 8 p.m. cut their obesity risk in half compared to those who went to sleep after 9 p.m. This simple lifestyle modification can make a lifelong health difference.

Understandably, this is easier said than done when one or both parents work late, which can delay dinner and evening activities. So parents might need to make compromises or adjustments at least on weeknights when there's less opportunity for family time.

Given the link between sleep and a [healthy weight](#), plus its many other benefits for kids' well-being, setting that 8 p.m. bedtime could be well worth the tradeoffs to make it happen.

### **Kids' Daily Sleep Needs**

- Infant to 12 months: 12 to 16 hours, including naps
- Ages 1 to 2: 11 to 14 hours, including naps
- Ages 3 to 5: 10 to 13 hours, including naps
- Ages 6 to 12: 9 to 12 hours
- Ages 13 to 18: 8 to 10 hours

**More information:** The U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health

Promotion has more on [the importance of sleep](#) for all ages.

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