

# Yawn!

by Dan Risch

## Don't let too little sleep slow you down.

As a member of his school's safety patrol, Aaron M. needs to get up early to help students arrive safely at school each morning. That isn't always easy. "For some reason," says the sixth grader from Kentucky, "on Wednesdays I'm always tired. I have no clue why."

Aaron's Wednesday tiredness may not be such a great mystery. Research shows that in general, kids don't get enough sleep. Surprisingly, though, parents, doctors, and kids don't always make the connection between daytime problems and too little sleep. There's a good chance that Aaron's slo-mo Wednesdays follow late-to-bed Tuesdays.

## Forty Winks and Good to Go?

It's hard to say exactly how much sleep each person needs. Part of the reason is that everyone has his or her own internal body clock. That clock controls your *circadian rhythms*, or the physical and mental changes your body goes through daily, including sleeping and waking up. When you feel sleepy during the day, your body is probably shouting "Get more shut-eye!"

To stay in sync with their inner clocks, kids and young teens need nine to 11 hours of sleep every night. Some kids may need a few winks more, some less. To figure out how much sleep works for you, adjust the recommended time up or down and pay attention to how you feel.

## But I'm Not Ready for Bed!

Everyone resists going to bed sometimes. But before throwing your internal clock out of whack, know what you're missing when you don't sleep well.

Aaron, who plays lacrosse and basketball while keeping his grades up, knows the value of sleep. "It gives you energy," he says. "You unwind and let go of stress." Emily M., Aaron's 11-year-old cousin, adds, "Without enough sleep, you don't pay attention in class and miss information that might be on a test."

Dean Beebe, a *neuropsychologist* at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, agrees. He treats illnesses that affect the brain and how people think. Beebe specializes in helping kids overcome problems caused by too little sleep. To be your best, says Beebe, you need to sleep your best.

Beebe suggests you become your own lab rat to figure out the ways getting enough sleep helps you have a better day. "Go to bed on time for four days," says Beebe. "Ask your parents to help. Afterwards, how do

you feel different? What differences do your parents notice?" The answers will tell you what you give up when you don't sleep enough.

## Outsmart Sleep-Stopppers And Booby Traps

Caffeine is the prime suspect Brian Crosby looks for when helping kids get their circadian rhythms in sync. Crosby, a Pennsylvania State University psychologist, encourages kids not to eat or drink anything containing caffeine after lunch. Caffeine keeps kids' bodies revved up for hours. (Except for when it doesn't. One study found that the teens who drank the most caffeine were also most likely to fall asleep in school!) Caffeine shows up in soft drinks, energy drinks, chocolate, and some cold medicines. Avoiding caffeine after lunch lets your body rid itself of caffeine by bedtime.

Other sleep thieves are TVs, computers, and video games. "It's screen time in general," Beebe says. "There's a tight connection between screen time and your total duration [or length] of sleep."

Another big problem keeping kids from getting their 40 winks is anxiety. "If I'm worried about a test the next day or I didn't finish my homework," says Emily, "I have trouble getting to sleep."

Aaron agrees. "If I don't get a good night's sleep, it's probably because I'm stressed. I'll have, like, three projects and a bunch of homework. I'm awake thinking about how I'm going to get things done." Emily says finishing homework and chores before going to bed helps her reduce stress.

Aaron tries his best to sleep enough. But when he can't, he has a system for getting himself up and ready for safety patrol on slow mornings. "I splash water on my face," he says. "It gets my body moving."

It works, even on Wednesdays.

## Did You Know?

Humans spend nearly one-third of their lives sleeping. That's the same as saying that for every two hours we're awake, we spend one hour asleep.

Source: Stanford Sleep and Dreams project

## Screen Time Zaps Sleep Time

"When a TV show that I want to watch is on late, I'll be tired the next day," says Emily M. Her experience is common. It's hard to turn off a good show that runs past bedtime.

Another way TV watching can affect sleep may surprise you. Have you ever plopped down in front of the TV after school, only to fall asleep? If you sleep too long, you may not be able to fall asleep at bedtime. Then you wake up tired and drag through the next day. If the pattern continues, you're trapped in a sleep-

loss cycle.

## Know When to Push Pause

Playing kickball or making music with your Wii gets your heart pounding. That's good, unless it's time for bed. A racing heart makes it hard to fall asleep. So hit the pause button on *vigorous* physical activity at least two hours before bedtime, if you can.

Vigorous - done with force or high energy

## Rethink Nap Time

Naps aren't just for babies. Studies show that naps benefit everyone-including adults. Memory is strengthened. Creativity gets a boost. And learning new things becomes a bit easier. So napping once in a while is actually a grown-up thing to do.

**Here's a nap-time guide:**

- **Keep it short**-15 to 25 minutes.
- **Nap early.** A too-late nap spoils nighttime sleep.
- **Don't be embarrassed if you feel you need a nap!** Some companies allow their workers time for napping. Google provides employees with "nap pods" for quick snoozes.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What does research show about the amount of sleep kids get?
  - A. Research shows that kids get too much sleep on weeknights and not enough sleep on weekends.
  - B. Research shows that in general, kids do not get enough sleep.
  - C. Research shows that in general, kids get enough sleep.
  - D. Research shows that in general, kids get too much sleep.
  
2. Not being able to sleep is an effect with more than one cause. What is one cause of not being able to sleep?
  - A. paying attention in school
  - B. going to bed on time
  - C. caffeine
  - D. protein
  
3. Sleeping well helps students do well in school.

What evidence in the text supports this conclusion?

- A. "When you feel sleepy during the day, your body is probably shouting 'Get more shut-eye!'"
  - B. "To stay in sync with their inner clocks, kids and young teens need nine to 11 hours of sleep every night."
  - C. "Emily M., Aaron's 11-year-old cousin, adds, 'Without enough sleep, you don't pay attention in class and miss information that might be on a test.'"
  - D. "Beebe suggests you become your own lab rat to figure out the ways getting enough sleep helps you have a better day. 'Go to bed on time for four days,' says Beebe."
4. Based on the information in the text, why might keeping naps short be a good idea?
    - A. Napping too long could make falling asleep at bedtime difficult.
    - B. Napping too long could make falling asleep at bedtime easy.
    - C. Napping too long could make your heart start pounding.
    - D. Napping too long could make you feel like you have no energy when you wake up from the nap.

**5.** What is the main idea of this text?

- A. Your circadian rhythms are the physical and mental changes your body goes through daily.
- B. Dean Beebe is a neuropsychologist who treats illnesses that affect the brain and how people think.
- C. Caffeine shows up in soft drinks, energy drinks, chocolate, and some cold medicines.
- D. There are different reasons kids do not get enough sleep and different things they can do about it.

**6.** Read these sentences from the text.

"Another big problem keeping kids from getting their 40 winks is anxiety. 'If I'm worried about a test the next day or I didn't finish my homework,' says Emily, 'I have trouble getting to sleep.'"

What does the phrase "getting their 40 winks" mean here?

- A. winking 40 times in a row
- B. getting too much sleep
- C. getting too little sleep
- D. getting enough sleep

**7.** Read these sentences from the text.

"It's hard to say exactly how much sleep each person needs. Part of the reason is that everyone has his or her own internal body clock. That clock controls your circadian rhythms, or the physical and mental changes your body goes through daily, including sleeping and waking up."

What word or phrase could replace "including" in the last sentence without changing the sentence's meaning?

- A. such as
- B. instead of
- C. although
- D. as a result

**8.** Read this sentence from the text.

"Studies show that naps benefit everyone-including adults."

What is one way that naps benefit people?

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**9.** Read this sentence from the text.

"Aaron, who plays lacrosse and basketball while keeping his grades up, knows the value of sleep."

According to Aaron, what does sleep give people?

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**10.** Neuropsychologist Dean Beebe suggests you experiment to figure out the ways getting enough sleep helps you have a better day.

Explain how getting enough sleep might help you have a better day.

Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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