

How much sleep do we really need?

Sleep is a basic human need and without it we simply wouldn't function properly just like if you use your laptop computer for too long, it will eventually power-down. Sleep acts as a way of "recharging our batteries", but how much sleep we need to get every night is a debate that has raged for years, with numbers ranging from six hours to nine hours, and the answer is that every person is different.

Newborn children spend most of their early days sleeping, even though they don't exactly do much to make themselves tired! In the first couple of months of a baby's life, don't be surprised to note that it is sleeping for as much as 18 hours every day, although this is likely to be broken up quite frequently. Between the first 3 and eleven months of your baby's life, this sleeping pattern may become a bit more disturbed, and although they may sleep around 10-12 hours every night, they will also sleep a lot during the day for a couple of hours each time, effectively reaching the same amount of sleep as they had during their first couple of months after birth.

Toddlers (ages 1-3) will still require a lot of sleep because they will be slowly being introduced to the world, such as potty training and eating, and this can be very tiring on their small bodies. They can sleep for around 12-14 hours every night and still enjoy a couple of small naps during the day – it is all part of the phase-down process from being a baby to becoming a child, and getting them used to requiring less sleep as they age.

Between the ages of 3 and 12, your child will gradually require less sleep and should fall into a pattern of having around 10 hours every night, and the naps during the day will become shorter and much less frequent, especially when they start school. Children can be very active, both in and out of school, and this takes its toll, meaning that when bedtime comes around, they should fall asleep quite quickly – providing you can get them to go to their [beds](#) in the first place!

As your child enters their teen years, assessing the amount of sleep they require is quite difficult. This is the time when people decide what course of life they want to take, whether they are going to be active sportspeople or lazy couched-potatoes! This can have a huge bearing on how much sleep they need and actually get, because many teenagers don't fulfil their sleep potential. They like to stay up later and later even though they still have to get up for school or college in the morning and if their timetable allows it, they will happily take an extra hour in bed in the morning, which sends their sleep pattern out of sync for that night.

Adults need about 7-9 hours sleep, but how much they get also varies on how they live their life. A high-ranking professional may only get about 6 hours every night and may have adjusted their body to only require this much, meaning that they do not suffer. However, a freelance writer, for example, who doesn't work all day every day, might be able to get their full quota of sleep without compromising their health or lifestyle.

About the Author

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