

# tasty times

important updates for success and more resources from the child care healthy food program



### Dear Child Care Provider,

When we think of childhood health and nutrition, sleep may not be the first thing that comes to mind. However, quality sleep is vital in helping children learn and retain knowledge. Child care providers can help parents keep their kids nutritionally balanced and physically active until it's time for bed. This *Tasty Times* aims to arm providers with tips and tricks to use during the day, to help kids maintain a healthy sleep schedule at night.

—Chloe Nivala, HFP Clerk

### Why Is Sleep So Important?



Deep, uninterrupted sleep boosts growth and allows the brain to build connections between its right and left hemisphere. A well-connected brain is vital to strong memory, learning skills, and creativity. When

children don't get enough sleep, they may have trouble paying attention in school, which can cause their grades to slip and they can become depressed. In fact, learning disabilities have been linked to poor connection between right and left hemispheres. In addition to the impact on mental health, lack of sleep may also affect their physical development and immune system.



containing high amounts of sugar at least 3 hours before bed. If the child is hungry before bed, feed them a light, healthy snack; this may even aid in helping the child fall asleep. Some examples of appropriate bedtime snacks are:



- **Walnuts and Almonds** contain melatonin, a natural sleep aid.
- **Kiwis, Pineapples, Tart Cherries and Banana** also contain melatonin and are still low enough in sugar to serve before bedtime.
- **Whole Grains** like popcorn, oatmeal, and whole-wheat crackers with nut butter can help aid in a good night's sleep.

### How much sleep does a child need?

Age	Recommended Sleep Hours per 24 Hour Period
<b>Infants:</b> 4 to 12 months	12 to 16 hours (including naps)
<b>Toddlers:</b> 1 to 2 years	11 to 14 hours (including naps)
<b>Preschoolers:</b> 3 to 5 years	10 to 13 hours (including naps)
<b>Grade-schoolers:</b> 6 to 12 years	9 to 12 hours
<b>Teens:</b> 13 to 18 years	8 to 10 hours

### The impact of food and beverages on sleep

It is important to feed children foods packed with energy and carbs during the day, so they may expend energy during playtime. Avoid giving them caffeinated beverages after lunch and foods

### Does a warm glass of milk really aid sleep?

It is believed that a warm glass of milk before bed helps children fall asleep at night. Milk contains **tryptophan**, an amino acid that produces **serotonin** (the feel-good chemical) which in turn, converts into **melatonin**.

However, it is difficult for the tryptophan to cross the brain-blood barrier due to competing amino acids present in milk. It is theorized that combining a tryptophan-rich food (milk) with a high carb food (whole wheat crackers) might help tryptophan more easily cross this barrier.

### Remember to keep bedtime snacks age-appropriate

Infants under six months should never be served solid food, and it is important to make sure they are developmentally ready to have solid foods after six months of age. A popular, yet dangerous, belief is that adding cereal or rice to an infant's bottle can help them sleep longer at night. This practice

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### Why Is Sleep So Important? *Continued*

is **not recommended** because it can cause the infant to aspirate. **Aspiration** is when liquids or solids are inhaled or gagged into the lungs. Adding cereal or rice to baby bottles can also keep the infants awake at night with upset stomachs.

Even though babies over 6 months of age can start eating solids if they are developmentally ready, it is still not recommended to add solids to their bottles. Instead, encourage development of fine motor skills by feeding rice or cereal to them on a spoon.

### How can I prepare a child for a good night's sleep if I watch them during the day?

Making sure a child gets enough exercise helps ensure that they will actually be tired at bedtime. Encourage your kids to play outside and get their energy out. Be sure to end their playtime 3 hours minimum before bedtime in order to give the children enough time to wind down.



### Physically active children are children ready to learn

Children who are physically healthy tend to be better behaved in school and have longer attention spans. The habits children develop early in life will follow them when they are older, which is why it is best to encourage physical activity and exercise in children while they are young.

During playtime, children are able to develop their motor skills, flexibility, and social confidence. It is recommended that children receive at least 60 minutes of structured play per day.



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### Interactive ways to encourage exercise and play:

- **Move Like an Animal!**

Tell the children that they are animals in a zoo, and it is naptime. Have them pretend to sleep. While they are “sleeping,” tap their shoulders and tell them “when you wake up you will be a kangaroo, chicken, snake (or other animal).” Once you have tapped all the children and assigned them animals, tell them “wake up animals, it’s day time!” and let them act out their animals. Repeat until the children lose interest.

- **Musical Statues**

Explain to the children that you will play music and they can dance around, however when you pause the music and call out “Statue!” they must freeze in the position they are in until the music is back on.



### Wind down time

It is important to wind down activities at least 3 hours before bedtime. This cool down period allows the child to make a smooth transition to sleep. Put on a movie or calm music, and encourage children to quietly color, work on a puzzle, or read a book, making sure to end screen-time at least one hour before bed. Parents will appreciate being sent home with a mellow child who can fall asleep without much fuss.

### Welcome New Providers!

Luz M. Campos

Ana I. Castaneda

Denise Gabriele

Eboney Hollingsworth

Aide Salgado

Taquita Williams

Remember, **November** claims  
are due **December 5th!**

**Warning! Late claims WILL  
result in late payment!**

### Healthy Food Program Number

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