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4 back-to-school sleep tips for parents

Summer often means later bedtimes, slower mornings, and relaxed routines. By the time school starts, many kids' sleep schedules are out of sync. Getting back on track can feel like starting from scratch.

You probably already know the basics: Stick to regular sleep and wake times, avoid screens before bed, and keep your child's room dark and cool. Those habits are important. But if you're looking to make the transition easier, these four tips can help reset your child's sleep routine as the new school year gets underway.

1 Use activity to your advantage. Regular physical activity helps kids stay healthy and sleep better at night. Experts recommend about an hour of activity each day. That could include riding a bike, climbing on the playground, playing outside, or even helping with chores.

If you've noticed your child has trouble falling or staying asleep, sleepwalks, or is cranky or hyper during the day because of lack of sleep, reach out to your pediatrician for support.



2 Rethink what they watch before bed. Turn off screens at least two hours before bedtime. Also avoid scary or violent TV shows, movies, and video games in the evening. They can make it harder for kids to fall asleep. Looking for more tips? Explore these healthy **screen time limits** for kids.

3 Time food and drinks wisely. Eating a large meal too close to bedtime can make it harder for kids to sleep well. Also avoid caffeine in the evening. Caffeinated sodas, energy drinks, and even chocolate should be avoided within six hours of bedtime.

4 Give worries a place to go. Anxiety and stress don't mix well with sleep. Adding some de-stressing activities into your bedtime routine can help. Ideas include:

- A "worry dump," where your child writes out their worries in a journal or shares them out loud with you
- **Mindfulness exercises**, like deep breathing, guided imagery, and body awareness techniques

Sleep doesn't always fall into place overnight. But over the next few weeks, you can help your child ease back into a healthy z's routine.

High blood pressure is reaching younger generations

When kids seem healthy on the outside — active, growing, and energetic — it's easy to assume their hearts are healthy, too. But researchers are finding that conditions once seen mainly in adults, including **high blood pressure**, are becoming more common in children.

One recent study found that rates of high blood pressure among children and teens have nearly doubled. Because it rarely causes symptoms, it can go unnoticed for years.

What's driving this rise?

The biggest factor appears to be childhood obesity. Nearly 19% of children with obesity had high blood pressure, compared with about 2% to 3% of children at a healthy weight. Carrying excess weight increases the risk of high blood pressure, which often continues into adulthood.

Left untreated, high blood pressure can raise the risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, and type 2 diabetes later in life. That's why preventing and treating it early is so important.

Heart health as a family goal

Families can work together to prevent high blood pressure. Here are a few easy everyday ways to show your heart some love:

- Build balanced meals with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- Cut back on sodium, sugar, and saturated fats.
- Stay active through play, sports, walking, or biking. Kids ages 6 and older should get about an hour of physical activity each day. Adults should aim for at least two and one-half hours a week.



- Turn household chores into a family workout challenge with activities like vacuuming, mopping, mowing the lawn, or raking leaves.
- Help kids manage stress by practicing deep breathing or encouraging creative activities like drawing, painting, writing, or dancing.
- Make healthy sleep a priority by limiting screen time before bed.

Regular checkups matter, too. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends routine **blood pressure screening** at yearly well-child visits, helping doctors spot concerns early, before symptoms appear.

Think of it this way: The habits kids learn at home today can shape how their hearts function for decades to come.

Women:

Put your health on the to-do list

This chart shows recommended screenings and vaccines for most women. Your doctor may recommend a different schedule based on your age, family history, or other health needs.

Condition	What you need	When/how often you need it
Test or screening for:		
Anxiety and depression	A questionnaire or discussion with your doctor about your emotions and other symptoms	At your regular visits, including during pregnancy and postpartum
Breast cancer	Mammogram	Ages 40 through 74: every 2 years
Cervical cancer	Pap test and/or HPV test	Ages 21 to 65: every 3 to 5 years, depending on the test
Colorectal cancer	Colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, CT colonography, or stool tests	Ages 45 to 75: every year to 3 years for stool tests, or 5 to 10 years for other tests
Diabetes	Blood test	Within a year after pregnancy, if you had gestational diabetes; other women with risk factors, including being overweight or obese
Gestational	Blood test	After 24 weeks of pregnancy
High cholesterol	Blood test	At least every 4 to 6 years
HIV	Blood, saliva, or urine test	Ask your doctor — as often as yearly
Hypertension	Blood pressure check	Regularly; ask your doctor
Osteoporosis	Bone density test	Age 65 or older; ask your doctor if you are 64 or younger and have gone through menopause
Urinary incontinence	Talk with your doctor about your symptoms, bathroom habits, and how they affect your life	Yearly
Vision and eye problems	Visual acuity test and dilated eye exam	Ask your doctor — as often as yearly
Vaccine for:		
Chickenpox	Varicella vaccine	If you were born in 1980 or later and have not previously had the disease or the vaccine: 2 doses
COVID-19	COVID-19 vaccine	One or more doses yearly
Hepatitis B	Hepatitis B vaccine	Ages 19 to 49: 2, 3, or 4 doses
Human papillomavirus, which causes cervical cancer	HPV vaccine	Before age 27; some adults ages 27 to 45 might also benefit, so talk with your doctor
Influenza	Flu shot	Yearly
Measles, mumps, and rubella	MMR vaccine	If you were born in 1957 or later and have not previously had the disease or the vaccine: 1 or 2 doses
Shingles	Zoster vaccine	Ages 50 and older: 2 doses
Tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough (pertussis)	Tdap	At least once, and again during every pregnancy; booster every 10 years

Called back after a mammogram?

Don't panic

If you've been asked to come back after a mammogram, you might feel anxious or caught off guard. That reaction is completely normal. But a callback doesn't automatically mean something is wrong. Here's what it usually means — and what comes next.

Know the stats

Your doctor may have said that you have an **“abnormal” mammogram**. This means that something has changed with your breasts, or something looks different on one breast versus the other. This is actually fairly common. By some estimates, after 10 years of screening, more than half of women will have encountered a finding like this.

What's less common is a breast cancer diagnosis after follow-up. In fact, fewer than one in 10 women who are called back for additional testing are found to have cancer.

Next steps

When a mammogram shows something that needs a closer look, your doctor will order additional tests to better understand the results. This can include another mammogram, an ultrasound, or an MRI, and might also involve a **biopsy**, where a breast tissue sample is taken and examined.

Understanding mammogram findings

Life — and hormone — changes are often responsible for breast changes. This can be due to:

- Your menstrual cycle
- Pregnancy
- Perimenopause and postmenopause
- Hormone treatments (birth control, hormone replacement therapy, injections)

Your age and breast density also influence results.

Mammogram findings don't necessarily mean cancer. A number of noncancerous conditions may show up on a scan, including:

- Enlargement of glands that make breast milk
- Pockets of fluid-filled tissue called cysts
- Blocked breast ducts



- A blood clot under the skin
- A benign tumor made of fat cells

If one of these is found, your doctor will advise you about next steps. Feeling worried is understandable — but a callback is usually a precaution, not a diagnosis. Following up allows your doctor to rule out concerns and provide more information.

Make follow-up a priority

If a mammogram or another preventive screening test — such as a colonoscopy — shows the need for more testing, follow up promptly. And don't let an unexpected result keep you from staying on schedule with future screenings. Mammograms remain one of the best tools for finding breast cancer early.

Could cooking help keep your mind sharp?

Cooking at home can do more than help you eat well. It may also give your brain a healthy workout.

A recent study found that people who prepared meals at home on a regular basis had a lower risk of developing **dementia**. The benefit was especially noticeable among people who were newer to cooking, suggesting it's never too late to start.

Why cooking counts

Preparing a meal uses many thinking skills at once. You have to plan ahead, follow directions, measure ingredients, manage your time, and adjust if something doesn't go as planned. These everyday tasks help keep your brain engaged.

Cooking also encourages movement and often leads to healthier food choices, making it a smart habit for both your body and your mind.

Keep it simple

You don't need to prepare gourmet meals to see the benefits. Focus on building balanced meals with a few healthy ingredients:

- Choose a protein such as beans, eggs, tofu, chicken, or seafood.
- Fill half your plate with colorful vegetables like broccoli, spinach, peppers, or sweet potatoes.
- Add a whole grain, such as brown rice, or whole-wheat bread.
- Include healthy fats from foods like olive oil, avocado, or nuts.
- Finish with fruit or low-fat dairy if you'd like a nutritious snack or dessert.

Making meals at home can also help you save money while cutting back on sodium, added sugar, and saturated fat often found in restaurant meals.



Bonus perk: Home-cooked meals tend to be more nutrient-dense and budget-friendly than takeout. That means you're not just supporting your brain — you're likely helping your wallet and overall health, too.

Cooking is better together!

Invite a friend or family member to cook with you, swap recipes, or share leftovers with a neighbor. Even a simple "Sunday supper" tradition gives everyone something to look forward to. *Ready to get cooking? Try our easy Greek chicken recipe on the next page!*

One-pan Greek chicken and veggies

A delicious, nutritious dinner with minimal cleanup? Yes, please!



Ingredients

1 ½ lb boneless, skinless chicken thighs or breasts
1 lb halved baby potatoes
1 red bell pepper, sliced
1 small red onion, sliced
2 Tbsp olive oil
2 tsp dried oregano
1 tsp garlic powder
½ tsp paprika
½ tsp salt
¼ tsp black pepper
1 lemon, zested and juiced

Optional toppings:

1 Tbsp crumbled feta
1 Tbsp chopped parsley
¼ cup plain Greek yogurt
or 2 Tbsp tzatziki

Directions

1. Heat oven to 425°F. Line a large sheet pan with parchment paper or foil.
2. Add potatoes, bell pepper, and red onion to the pan. Drizzle with half the olive oil and toss to coat.
3. Place chicken on the pan among the vegetables. Drizzle with remaining olive oil and season with oregano, garlic powder, paprika, salt, and pepper.
4. Sprinkle lemon zest over everything, then squeeze half the lemon juice across the pan.
5. Roast for 30 to 35 minutes, flipping the chicken and stirring the vegetables halfway through. The chicken should reach 165°F internally, and the potatoes should be fork-tender.
6. Finish with remaining lemon juice. Top with feta and parsley if using. Serve as-is or with a spoonful of yogurt or tzatziki.

Per serving

Serves four. Each serving provides about 373 calories, 12 g total fat, 124 mg cholesterol, 386 mg sodium, 25 g total carbohydrate, 2 g dietary fiber, 4 g total sugars, 1.5 g added sugars, and 41 g protein.

Optional toppings add about 84 calories, 3 g total fat, 13 mg cholesterol, 179 mg sodium, 5 g total carbohydrate, 3.5 g total sugars, and 9 g protein.

Looking for more meal inspiration?

Find new **recipes** the whole family can enjoy!

6 BITE-SIZED tips for healthier teeth

Ready to give your teeth a stronger defense? These small, everyday changes can help preserve enamel and keep your smile healthy for years to come.



3

Wear a nightguard.

If you grind your teeth at night, a custom mouthguard can reduce pressure. Ask your dentist if you should get fitted for one.



1

Use a soft-bristle toothbrush.

Gently brush twice a day with a **fluoride toothpaste**.

2

Rinse after acidic drinks.

A quick swish with water can wash away acids before they linger on teeth.



5

Stay hydrated.

Drinking water helps keep your mouth clean and prevents dry mouth (which increases your risk for **tooth decay**).

4

Snack smart.

Limit sticky candy and foods with added sugars. Instead, reach for high-calcium options, such as cheese and plain yogurt, to help tooth health.



6

Schedule regular checkups.

Dentists can spot early signs of wear and recommend protective treatments before bigger problems, like cavities or gum disease, develop.



Give enamel the TLC it deserves, and it'll return the favor in every bite, chew, and crunch! Protecting it today means fewer dental dramas tomorrow.

