

To Do Their Best, Children Need Enough Sleep At Least Nine Hours Each Night Recommended

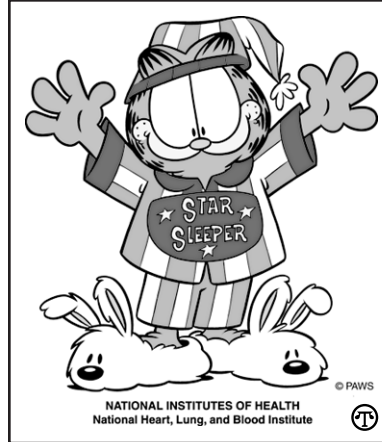
(NAPS)—It's that time again! The kids need new backpacks, sharpened pencils, and nutritious school lunches. But don't forget something else they need for a successful school day—at least nine hours of restful sleep each night.

That's right! The National Center on Sleep Disorders Research at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) is advising parents that most children need at least nine hours of sleep each night to do their best in school, sports, family relationships and friendships, and other activities.

According to NHLBI Director Dr. Claude Lenfant, "We want parents of young children to understand that adequate nighttime sleep is important to children's health, safety, and performance, and we would like to see children establish a good night's sleep as a lifelong habit. The beginning of the school year is a perfect time to start them on a schedule that allows for enough restful sleep each night."

Of course, getting children to sleep at night can be a challenge. But the NHLBI has some tips for parents that should help:

1. Set a regular time for bed each night and stick to it
2. Establish a relaxing bedtime routine, such as giving your child a warm bath or reading him or her a story
3. Make after-dinner playtime a relaxing time; too much exercise close to bedtime can keep children awake
4. Avoid feeding children a big meal close to bedtime
5. Avoid giving children anything with caffeine less than six hours before bedtime



6. Set the bedroom temperature so that it's comfortable—not too warm and not too cool

7. Make sure the bedroom is dark; if necessary, use a small nightlight

8. Keep the noise level low

To help parents initiate this new routine, the NHLBI has named Garfield the Cat as its Star Sleeper and produced some fun, interactive, and easy-to-use tools featuring Garfield to teach children about the importance of sleep. A 48-page Fun Pad—filled with games and puzzles with sleep messages—is available on the NHLBI Web Site at <http://starsleep.nhlbi.nih.gov>. It also can be ordered from the NHLBI online catalog at www.nhlbi.nih.gov. A 14-inch Garfield plush doll, complete with bunny rabbit slippers and Star Sleeper "jammies" also is available from the online catalog. For more information, visit the Star Sleeper Web Site or contact the NHLBI Health Information Network, P.O. Box 30105, Bethesda, MD 20824-0105, 301-592-8573.