Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Benefits of a Bedtime Routine in Young Children: Sleep, Development and Beyond

Visit Article

This paper presents a conceptual model and reviews the empirical evidence to support a nightly bedtime routine as a key factor in the promotion of not only healthy sleep, but also of broad development and wellbeing in early childhood. A bedtime routine embodies the characteristics of nurturing care and early child stimulation, which are deemed to be essential for positive outcomes, especially for at-risk children. Furthermore, common, adaptive components of a bedtime routine can contribute to an array of positive developmental outcomes beyond improved sleep, inclusive of language development, literacy, child emotional and behavioral regulation, parent-child attachment, and family functioning, among other outcomes. These bedtime routine components include activities in the broad domains of nutrition (e.g., feeding, healthy snack), hygiene (e.g., bathing, oral care), communication (e.g., reading, singing/lullabies) and physical contact (e.g., massage, cuddling/rocking). A bedtime routine can provide multiple benefits to child and family functioning at a time of day that many parents are present with their children. Although additional research on hypothesized routine-related child outcomes and mechanisms of action are needed, promoting a bedtime routine may be a feasible and cost-effective method to promote positive early childhood development worldwide, particularly for socioeconomically disadvantaged and other at-risk young children.

Journal:

http://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/sleep-medicine-reviews
Authors: Mindell JA, Williamson AA

Related Content

- Why Sleep is Important and What Your Family Needs to Know for Back to School Routines
  Blog Post
  Aug 14, 2018