

# Study: Sleep-deprived kids get fat

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Children who don't get enough sleep are more likely to be overweight than those who get plenty of sleep, a study reported.

This adds to a growing body of evidence that adequate sleep is important for weight control. Other research has revealed that sleep deprivation increases levels of a hunger hormone and decreases levels of a hormone that makes people feel full.

About one-third of the children in the United States are overweight or obese, government data show.

Researchers at Northwestern

University in Evanston, Ill., reviewed national data on more than 1,400 kids ages 3 to 12; follow-up data on the same children were collected five years later. The parents completed time diaries on children's bedtime and wake-up times. Children's height and weight were measured on two occasions.

The National Sleep Foundation recommends that preschoolers get 11 to 13 hours of sleep each night. Children ages 5 to 12 years are supposed to sleep 10 to 11 hours a night; teens, nine hours.

Findings in the journal *Child Development*:

■ Many children aren't sleeping enough on weeknights:

10-year-olds slept an average of 9.5 hours a night; 14-year-olds, 8.5 hours; 17-year-olds, 8 hours.

■ About 36 percent of children ages 3 to 8 who slept an average of 10 hours — too little for the wee ones and barely enough for the older children — were overweight by middle school.

■ Only 30 percent of children in that age range who got about 11 hours of sleep a night were overweight in middle school.

Overall, those who got an hour less sleep than their peers tended to be an average of 5 pounds heavier, says Emily Snell, a graduate student in human development and social policy at Northwestern. "Many kids have to get up at 6 a.m. or 7

a.m. to go to day care or school, so parents may want to push them to bed at 8 p.m. so they can get 10 or more hours sleep a night," she says. A good night's sleep may help children achieve a healthy weight well as improve their mood and school performance, she says.

University of Chicago sleep researcher Eve Van Cauter says it's possible these children are hungrier because of changes in appetite and fullness hormone.

"It's also quite possible that when (children are) really tired, they are less likely to go outside and play or engage in sport, and they may be more likely to slouch in front of the television."