

Health Trends in Early Childhood

August 2025



Sleep Matters



Trend

Insufficient sleep is a **worldwide epidemic**.

Only about **1 out of 3** adults in the U.S. report consistently getting the sleep they need.

In 2020-2021, Pennsylvania parents were surveyed and **31.9%** of children aged 4 months to 14 years were **not getting enough sleep**.



Explanation

When infants and toddlers sleep, a **massive amount of information** is being processed by the brain.

Rapid brain architecture, building and scaffolding of neural networks occurs during sleep.

This is why **infants and toddlers** require more sleep in general.



Impact

Sleep **improves physical health and mental health**.

It **strengthens immunity, improves cognition and regulates emotions**. It **improves behavioral alertness and performance**.

Sleep **improves learning and affects early childhood health and well-being**.



Action

Optimize sleep in the early learning setting: monitor lighting, temperature and sounds.

Provide **consistent and structured routines** for napping.

Spend more time **outdoors** in natural sunlight.

Maintain **cooler bedtime temperatures**.

Avoid **over-heating** or **excessive swaddling** of infants.

Resources

- Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University: [Podcast: Why Sleep Matters in Early Childhood Development](#)
- How to Keep Your Sleeping Baby Safe: AAP Policy Explained: [How to Keep Your Sleeping Baby Safe](#)