

# Remember: Nine Hours Of Sleep Is Key To Children Doing Their Best

(NAPSA)—There is more to school than pencils, binders, and backpacks. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) encourages parents to put adequate nighttime sleep on the list too.

Getting at least nine hours of sleep each night on a regular basis is critical for children's health, safety, and performance in school and other activities, according to the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research (NCSDR) at NHLBI. Inadequate sleep in children can lead to attention difficulties, easy frustration, and difficulty controlling emotions.

"Adequate nighttime sleep is just as important as healthy eating and exercise for children's development," said NHLBI Director Claude Lenfant, M.D. "A new school year is a great time to establish a good night's sleep as a lifelong habit."

NHLBI and NCSDR are launching a "How I Get a Heap of Sleep" contest with Paws, Inc., the creative studio behind Garfield the Cat and NHLBI's partner in the *Sleep Well. Do Well. Star Sleeper Campaign*. The Campaign's goal is to educate children ages 7 to 11—their parents, teachers, and health care providers—about the importance of adequate nighttime sleep.

The contest invites children to tell Garfield—the Campaign's "spokescat" and "Star Sleeper"—three things they do each night to help them get a good night's sleep and why, such as reading a story or taking a warm bath. Contest information and entry forms are available on the Campaign's Web site at

## Sleep Tips For Kids

- Establish a regular bedtime and stick to it. Reinforcing a child's biological clock makes it easier to fall asleep quickly and awake feeling fully rested and alert.
- Eliminate distractions, such as a television or computer, in your child's room.
- Avoid feeding your child a big meal too close to bedtime.
- Avoid sodas and other beverages with caffeine less than six hours before bedtime. They can interfere with a good night's sleep.
- Build in quiet time before bedtime. Children may want to go outside to play after dinner, but make sure they relax before bedtime.
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine. Is it a bath in the evening, followed by a book? Or the reverse? Find out what works best, and stick to it.
- Make sure the room is dark and quiet and the bed is comfortable. Use a nightlight if your child finds the dark scary.
- Be sure the bedroom isn't too hot or too cold, and that pajamas are comfortable and seasonal.

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute



<http://starsleep.nhlbi.nih.gov> and the Garfield Web site at [www.garfield.com](http://www.garfield.com).

Information for parents, as well as fun, interactive games with sleep messages for children, are also available on the Star Sleeper Web site. You can also check out Star Sleeper gear, including a 48-page Fun Pad filled with games and puzzles and a 14-inch Garfield plush doll, complete with bunny rabbit slippers and Star Sleeper "jammies." **About the Sleep Well. Do Well. Star Sleeper Campaign**

In February 2001, the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research at the National Heart,

Lung, and Blood Institute launched the Sleep Well. Do Well. Star Sleeper Campaign to educate America's children—and their parents, educators and health care providers—about the fact that children ages 7 to 11 need at least nine hours of sleep each night on a regular basis to do their best at whatever they do. The Campaign is co-sponsored by Paws, Inc., the corporate entity behind Garfield the Cat. Garfield is the Campaign's official "spokescat." Other founding partners include the National Association of Elementary Schools Principals and the American Academy of Pediatrics.