



# Early Childhood Learning Center

Irvine Unified School District

1 Smoketree, Irvine, CA 92604

## “5 and Under” Health and Wellness Corner

Health & Wellness Newsletter:  
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Hello...and welcome to our monthly feature on health and wellness! Look for articles here that pertain to children through the age of five. These articles are provided by the School Readiness Program which offers help in the areas of Health, Mental Health and Education to families who have young children. We're located at the [Early Childhood Learning Center](#), 1 Smoketree, Irvine, CA 92604.



### ROUTINES



Well hey there! Welcome back to school! We missed you! During any holiday break, routines are suspended. But, with the school term beginning again, we have a return to routines. And when your child gets back to a routine, it seems to force the rest of the family to fall in line.

**Sleep routine** Sleep is crucial for both adults and children. During the 2 to 3 short-wave cycles of sleep your child gets per night, the brain is busy doing important things like releasing growth hormone, and putting all the things you learned during the day into your memory. Both have big implications for children. Obviously if your child gets less than 2 to 3 of those short-wave cycles of sleep, then there is less growth hormone produced. And if there's less growth hormone released, you can expect that over time, your child will not grow to his or her maximum potential. Although you might be a parent who says, "If you don't finish your dinner, you won't grow to be as tall as Mommy and Daddy", it would be more accurate to say, "If you don't get your sleep, you won't grow to be as tall as Mommy and Daddy." Sufficient sleep also enables your child to recall things learned days before. If the brain has had enough time to put those facts into its memory, then those facts will be there to recall. The brain can either build upon that memory & learn something more complex, or it can recall it for a test (in the case of children in elementary school, and older.)

Overall, five year olds need eleven hours of sleep a night. If school starts at about 8:00 a.m. your little one's probably getting up around 7:00 a.m. Therefore, **8:00 p.m. is the bedtime** needed to obtain 11 hours sleep. Children need more sleep the younger they are. A 4 year old needs 11 ½ hours, 12 hours for a 3 year old, and 13 hours for a 2 year old. (For the 2 & 3 year old that amount of time includes a nap.) There should also be a bedtime routine so your child knows what to expect. The routine can be filled with playtime with parents, or perhaps a visit outside to look at the night sky. Then transition to the bathroom to bathe. After that, brushing and flossing the teeth can precede moving into the bedroom for some quiet time before getting into bed. Reading to your child is a lovely habit to get into at this time of the day. Be sure you pick a book with an appropriate theme. Reading a story about sharks and how they survive in the ocean might not be the best choice for a sensitive child.

While most every parent loves snuggling with their child, it would be best for your child to fall asleep in his or her bed, without needing a parent to be right next to them. Snuggling can be enjoyed by both you and your child a different part of the day. Night time is when children need to go to sleep...by themselves. If your child can't do that, you can encourage that gradually. If you need help with this, we are both available to talk to you about ways to accomplish this. You can find Linda and Michael in the School Readiness Program in the ECLC.

**Hygiene routine.** Some children have a difficult time getting up, showered, dressed & fed in an hour; so bathing in the evening (as mentioned above) is preferable. It's also a nice way to begin relaxing before bed. Five year olds should be learning how to take a shower, but a leisurely bath is okay too. In the morning children should learn to wake up, use the toilet & wash their hands. Then, teeth must be brushed. Some children prefer brushing after eating breakfast...it may help breakfast taste better. Just make sure they brush their teeth before leaving the house!

**Clothing routine** For some children, deciding what to wear is a problem. The solution? Have them pick out their clothing the night before. You can give them a choice of two outfits. Then put the rejected outfit away and leave their choice out to minimize your morning hassles!

**BREAKFAST!!** Last, but not at all least! There are countless studies that prove that breakfast has a HUGE effect on how your child does through the day. Food is the body's fuel. Without fuel, the car won't go...and neither will your child. After all, they're in school to learn. So, feed that brain! Breakfast should have some protein, fat and fiber in it. These three things take longer for the stomach to digest—therefore they stay in the stomach longer than just carbohydrates. So, cereal (with fiber) with milk, leftover pizza, a quesadilla, eggs, whole wheat pancakes or waffles, or a sandwich. As long as it's nutritious, it's fine.

**WELCOME TO THE SECOND HALF OF THE SCHOOL YEAR & GET INTO A GOOD ROUTINE!**

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<http://schoolreadiness.iusd.org>

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