



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Contact: Catie Wardwell
Phone: (208) 381-2894
wardwelc@slrnc.org

FROM ZZZ's TO A's: HEALTHY SLEEP IS KEY FOR BACK-TO-SCHOOL SUCCESS

*St. Luke's Sleep Center and The National Sleep Foundation Offer
Tips for Back-To-School Sleep Schedules*

Boise, ID (August 13, 2007) – As the new school year approaches, St. Luke's Sleep Center and the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) encourages parents and kids to put healthy sleep on the list of back-to-school necessities. NSF recommends gradually adjusting sleep schedules now (two weeks prior to the start of school) in order to be alert and energized as well as to assure optimal learning, participation, and health.

"Kids tend to sleep and wake up later during the summer, making the transition to the school-year sleep schedule difficult," said Mary Gable, Registered Polysomnographic Technologist, and manager of St. Luke's Sleep Center. "As tempting as it is to enjoy sleeping late in the final days of summer break, getting up earlier for school will be much easier if kids begin adjusting their sleep schedules now."

All children – even adolescents – need more sleep than adults. According to NSF's 2004 and 2006 *Sleep in America* polls, which focused on children aged 0-10 and 11-17 respectively, most kids in the U.S. do not get the amount of sleep experts recommend. Optimal sleep is essential to a child's health, safety, and academic performance. Kids who do not sleep well are more likely to have behavioral problems and face academic challenges.

"Adequate sleep is just as important to kids' health and well-being as diet and exercise," says Daniel Lewin, PhD, director of the Pediatric Behavioral Sleep Medicine Program at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC. "Getting enough sleep facilitates learning and improves memory, which are both vital to improving academic performance as well as optimizing participation in social and athletic activities."

Parents may also find themselves unprepared for the sleep challenges that the new school year brings. Many need to wake up earlier in order to pack lunches, drive their kids to school or help them get to the bus stop on time. This is particularly true of mothers, many of whom are already sleep-deprived. NSF's 2007 *Sleep in America* poll revealed that 60 percent of women in the U.S. report only getting a good night's sleep a few nights a week or less, leaving them time-pressed, stressed-out, and too tired for romance and spending time with their friends

(MORE)

St. Luke's and NSF recommend these sleep tips to help parents and children start the school year strong:

- Gradually adjust to earlier sleep and wake schedules ten days to two weeks before school begins. This will set biological clocks to the new schedule.
- Keep a regular sleep schedule, and avoid extremes on weekends. Having a regular bedtime increases the likelihood that kids – including teens – will get optimal sleep.
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine. Reading before bed is a good choice for kids of all ages and for parents.
- Create a sleep environment that is cool, quiet, dimly lit, and comfortable.
- Keep television, video games, and other electronics out of the bedroom. NSF's 2006 *Sleep in America* poll revealed that having electronic devices in the bedroom is associated with an increased risk of falling asleep in class and while doing homework. Eliminate exposure to electronic media (television, video and computer games etc.) within an hour of bedtime.
- Limit caffeine, especially after lunchtime.
- Eat well and exercise

NSF's 2006 poll also showed an awareness gap between kids and their parents. While more than half of adolescents reported not getting the sleep they need, 90 percent of parents felt that their adolescent was getting enough sleep. Parents should talk to their children about their sleep and seek help for any sleep problems that may arise.

More sleep-smart pointers for parents:

- Be an example. By practicing good sleep habits, your kids are less likely to adopt bad ones.
- Talk to your kids about the importance of healthy sleep and the consequences of sleepiness.
- Recognize that children – including teens – need more sleep than adults.
- Children who have difficulty waking in the morning on more than three days a week or who snore may not be getting adequate sleep or should be evaluated by a specialist.
- Establish a one-hour “electronic-free” time before bedtime.
- Ask teachers whether your child is alert or sleepy during class and take steps to improve your child's sleep if you feel that he or she may have a sleep problem.

For more information about sleep disorders, call the Idaho Sleep Disorders Center at St. Luke's Meridian at 706-5380.

St. Luke's Health System is Idaho's only locally owned, not-for-profit health system. The system offers a full continuum of care through its four hospitals and more than 30 outpatient centers and clinics. St. Luke's Health System's 6,400 employees, 867-member medical staff, and more than 850 volunteers are committed to delivering the highest quality care to those in medical need regardless of their ability to pay. With a mission “To improve the health of people in our region,” St. Luke's Health System provided \$138 million (including capital) in community benefit during its 2006 fiscal year. The hospitals of St. Luke's Health System have earned numerous national awards and recognition for excellence in patient care. For more information about St. Luke's Health System, visit www.stlukesonline.org.