

Attention concerns in children can be attributed to several variables. Here are a few suggestions that parents have control over that may affect their child's attention at home or school.



1. Sleep.

Not enough sleep can significantly affect a child's ability to focus and sustain attention, especially in a learning environment. Think about how you feel when you don't get a good night's sleep.

Elementary children need 10-12 hours of sleep each night. Establish a bedtime routine and try to be consistent.

If your child has a difficult time sleeping, have a wind down or quiet time to help him relax.

Remove the TV and Playstation. These actually will stimulate your child, making sleep more difficult. Instead, try a bath, snuggle with a book, turn down the lights or play soothing music.

2. Diet.

Foods with a lot of preservatives and artificial coloring lack high nutritional value. Lack of

vitamins and minerals can affect brain growth and overall ability to focus and pay attention at school.

Provide healthy snacks such as fruits and veggies. If your child does not like veggies and meats, make a casserole. You can "sneak" a lot of healthy foods into a casserole that will look appealing to your child.

Don't substitute ease for healthy. Prepackaged food is convenient, but generally full of "bad" fats. For convenience, make a large amount of food and separate into smaller portions and freeze for future use.

Limit eating out and fast foods to once in a while. These traps are loaded with unhealthy choices that don't offer nutritional value to your child's growing mind and body.



3. Exercise.

Movement is important in every child's life. Children who are fidgety are often seeking out movement. With regular breaks and exercise, their bodies will be able to sit for longer periods of time.

Incorporate regular exercise into your every day life. Play outside, take a walk, have him

ride his bike. If it is too cold out, go up and down the stairs, walk in place or do stationary exercises. Get that blood flowing! Not only will it keep his muscles in shape, but his mind too!

Limit TV and Playstation in the evening. These activities actually shorten your mental attention span.

4. Routines.

As much as children push limits, they thrive on routine and consistency. When children know what to expect, they are able to focus on their work and activities.

Be realistic and stick with your behavioral discipline. Give a punishment you know you can enforce. (if you are going to leave the store because of a tantrum, you'd better be prepared to leave the groceries in the aisle).

Children (and adults) need 5 positive remarks for every 1 negative interaction. Provide LOTS of positives... Catch him being good.



If you have further questions, please contact your child's teacher, school counselor or school psychologist.