More Physical Activities and Sleep, With Limited Screen Time Leads to Higher Test Scores – Study

A new study from the Lancet Child & Adolescent Health found that higher test scores for United States students aged 8 through 11 came down to three factors: a minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity a day, nine to 11 hours of sleep a night, and no more than two hours a day of recreational screen time. Kids who did all of those things had test scores that were four percent higher. Of the 4520 students examined, only 216, or 5 percent, of them met that criteria.

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Take Advantage of Synergy

All three of these factors amplify each other, making this a compelling study.

Of the three elements identified, more children were getting enough sleep and watched less than two hours of screens a day. Only 18 percent of kids were getting at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily. Many adults are in the same boat, with the CDC reporting that only 23% of adults in the U.S. get enough exercise.

Getting enough exercise or physical movement can also affect sleep in profound ways. A study in the journal Sleep Medicine found that insomniacs got 85 more minutes of sleep a night after working out for four months. Sleep is especially important for young people. Another study recently found that high school students who got less than six hours of

sleep a night were twice as likely to report drug use or poor decision-making skills.

One of the most commonly cited reasons for insufficient sleep? Screen time, especially before bed. Screens can delay bedtime. They also make it harder for kids to wind down and disrupt the body's natural circadian rhythms. Excess screen time for children can lead to issues with cognitive functions, like language ability, memory, and task completion.

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In Combination

When you consider how intertwined all of these factors are, it makes sense that kids that get enough sleep, exercise, and avoid excess screens are scoring higher on tests. Our take? Check out their diet, too. While we're all aware of the effect of too much sugar on kids and bedtime, getting the right nutrition goes way beyond that. This study examines the steps needed to set students up for success, and diet is absolutely the foundation.

Sources:

- *Too much screen time, too little horseplay for kids: study* – Digital Journal
- *Associations between 24 hour movement behaviours and global cognition in US children: a cross-sectional observational study* – The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health
- *The Sleep and Exercise Connection That Can Change Your Life and Your Workouts* – Shape
- *Study flags later risks for sleep-deprived kids* – Harvard Gazette
- *New Study Shows Lack of Sleep in Teens Is Associated with Risky Behavior* – Boston Magazine