

Time for Family Fun

When the winter doldrums hit, head out on the town for family activities that fit any budget



Free

Story time: Most branches of Madison Public Library system stay open until 9 p.m. on week nights and offer plenty of activities to keep your family busy. Check out the online event calendar for times and dates of book readings, plays and even a library LEGO club. Madisonpubliclibrary.org

Indoor entertainment: When a day playing in the snow just won't cut it, head to the Overture Center for the Arts for one of the free Saturday Kids in the Rotunda performances by local and regional acts that range from yo-yo tricksters and jugglers to musicians and more. Overturecenter.com

Space for imagination: Let wonder take over with a visit to the UW Space Place—a free and open-to-the public venue for presentations, kid-friendly activities and more from the local experts researching all that's happening beyond our planet. Find details of Saturday Science Workshops for children and parents as well as guest presentations online. spaceplace.wisc.edu

\$1–\$5 per child

Take a dip: Don't let the frozen lakes keep you from splashing around like it's summer. Local swim schools like SwimWest and Kittelson Swim School, as well as YMCA locations across Madison, offer open swims and family fun nights. If a waterslide is what you're after, head to Crawdaddy Cove water park at the Holiday Inn for all your sliding needs. Swimwest.com, kittelsonswim.com, ymcadanecounty.org, wiscotels.com

See the stars: Stare up at the night sky, name the constellations and find the Milky Way all while keeping warm at Memorial High School's planetarium, which offers monthly public shows through May. planetariumweb.madison.k12.wi.us

Score a hole-in-one: From Vitense Golf and Glowgolf (for glow-in-the-dark mini-golf) on the east side, Madison has plenty of options for a night of adventure. vitense.com and opryglowgolf.com

Over \$6 per child

Hands-on learning: The new and improved Madison Children's Museum has a host of unique attractions to allow little imaginations to run wild, including a human-sized gerbil wheel and a rooftop garden that is open year-round. Visit the museum website for information on upcoming exhibits and programs. Madisonchildrensmuseum.org

Take in a show: Enjoy an evening of live entertainment at one of the city's many theaters. In particular, The Children's Theater of Madison offers shows at the Overture Center that are a delight for both children and adults alike. The theatre's next performance takes place in February—get your tickets now! ctmtheater.org

Bounce around: Burn off some pent-up energy while jumping and climbing through giant inflatable contraptions at Pump it Up on the southwest side or BounceU on the east side. Find information on Family Bounce Nights on each website. pumpitupparty.com or bounceu.com

Ask Doctor Mom

The importance of shut-eye



By Elizabeth Goetz

This time of year, my kids always get strung out. Maybe it's the gloomy weather or maybe the school year is starting to get old. Either way, I know it often has to do with lack of sleep.

A very wise nurse once told me that when children were misbehaving I should feed them and put them to bed. Until I took her advice, I never understood how a lack of sleep could also affect their behavior. Let's face it, we all get grumpy when we don't get adequate shut-eye, but for children there can be an array of consequences—from becoming hyperactive, to having difficulty concentrating, learning and interacting with peers. In fact, children with obstructive sleep apnea—which causes interruptions in sleep—have been found to have significant reductions in behavior problems, including ADHD, following removal of their tonsils and restoration of normal sleeping patterns.

It's important that children hit the sack early enough to ensure they get enough sleep. Here are general guidelines for knowing how much sleep they'll need: A 2-year-old should get 13 hours of sleep each night plus a two-hour nap. By the time a child is 5, he/she needs around 11 hours. A 9-year-old should get 10 hours each night, while 11- to 14-year-olds need about nine hours each night. Teenagers only need to doze eight hours to feel rested—though many teen's sleep habits would say otherwise! Of course, each child has his or her own needs, and as a parent it's our job to become attuned to them.

With early school start times and after-school activities, we're often too busy to get our kids—and ourselves—to bed early enough to catch our Zs. But enforcing regular bedtimes and wake-up times is one way to make sure that their little bodies get all the rest they need.

Elizabeth Goetz is a local pediatrician at UW Health and the mother of three girls, ages 1, 4 and 8.