

Stars hit red carpet for new Superman movie

Lack of sleep and junk food harming pupils

By Clodagh Sheehy

POOR sleep and junk food is the perfect recipe for poor performance at school among primary school children, a leading nutritional therapist has warned.

Her remarks come in the wake of a report showing that one in five Irish teachers have reported their young pupils are suffering from a lack of sleep and basic nutrition.

Nutritional therapist Dee Daly, who runs classes teaching healthy eating habits for the whole family, said: "If you haven't slept well, it affects your appetite and you are more likely to reach for sugary foods and carbohydrates."

"Studies in the US and UK have shown that this in turn creates difficulties in terms of behaviour, concentration and

performance in the classroom." An international study by the Educational Research Centre, just released, found that 22pc of Irish primary teachers reported their pupils were suffering from a lack of basic nutrition and 4pc said this was completely limiting their teaching.

COMPUTERS

Nearly two thirds of the teachers said their classes of 10-year-olds were suffering from a lack of sufficient sleep, which is 14pc above the international average in 60 countries.

TVs and computers in children's bedrooms are being blamed for sleep disturbance, with 54pc of 10-year-olds here reporting that they have both in their rooms.

Ms Daly explained that poor sleep affects the balance of two hormones, one to increase

appetite and one to lessen it. Poor sleep makes children "more likely to crave sugary food, which leads to sugar spikes followed by sleepiness".

She recommends a combination of "sleep hygiene" and proper nutrition.

"Your bedroom should be like a bat cave - cool, dark and quiet."

"Blue light from computers, iPads and TV screens keep your brain awake for longer and children should not be 'texting under the covers' on their mobile phones."

She stresses the importance of creating a sleep pattern where children wind down before they go to bed and eat a proper breakfast with a balance of proteins and complex carbohydrates to set them up for school.

READ EAMON KEANE, P15



NIGHT OUT: Clockwise from top left: Jenny Dixon, Gayle Kaneswaren, Sinead Noonan, Jenny McCarthy and Martin King with kids at Irish premiere of Superman Man Of Steel

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