

## Alert: Kids Sleep Through Fire Alarms

Inside a child's bedroom a smoke alarm beeps shrilly. A 14 year-old boy stirs slightly; his 8-year-old brother never awakens. Luckily, these boys weren't in a burning house. But in this simulation stated by the Norther Shore Fire Department in Milwaukee County, WI, six of eight kids slept through piercing fire alarms. "Kids spend 30% of the night in extremely deep sleep. They're difficult to wake up, or are so disoriented they may hide or be unable to leave the house in case of fire," says Stephen Sheldon, DO, director of the Sleep Medicine Center at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago and cochair of a team researching better smoke alarms for kids. House fires can double in size *every 20 seconds*; here's how to get your kids out in time.

- Do the drill. Have a fire escape plan; practice twice a year.
- Plan for search and rescue. In the event of a fire, alert all children and be prepared to help them escape. Check beds and hiding places. Practice assisting or carrying kids outside.
- Maintain alarms so *you'll* wake up. Test monthly; change batteries annually. Have at least one 85-decibel alarm on each floor and outside all sleeping areas. — Lori Nudo