

# Sleep Tips for Teenagers

---

The following suggestions can help your teenager meet sleep needs for their changing bodies.

## **Get adequate sleep.**

Research tells us that teenagers need about 9 hours of sleep on average each night to be fully alert during the day. This amount of sleep time is often difficult for teens to get due to their early school start time, after-school activities, homework demands, and possibly even work or social schedules for older teens. So it is not surprising that most teens are sleep deprived and often try to catch up on missed sleep on the weekend. A better option for teens is to keep a regular sleep-wake schedule on weekdays as well as on the weekends, not varying the schedule by more than 1 hour.

## **Rejuvenate with a midday snooze.**

Naps are okay if your teen wants or likes to take them. However, naps should be limited to no more than 20-30 minutes and should be taken in the early afternoon only. Napping too long or too late in the afternoon makes it difficult to fall asleep at bedtime.

## **Get regular exercise.**

Exercise, 30 to 60 minutes, at least four times a week, will lead to better fitness and better sleep. The only caution about exercise is to not do it within 2-3 hours of bedtime as this is a time when the body needs to be winding down for sleep.

## **Limit caffeine intake.**

Caffeine can disrupt sleep, so consumption of caffeine-containing products should be avoided in the evening. Be aware, aside from the more obvious colas and coffee, caffeine-containing products include iced tea, some clear non-cola pops, energy drinks and chocolates.

## **Don't go to bed hungry.**

Make sure your teen doesn't go to bed hungry. Provide a light snack such as a glass of milk, a piece of fruit, cereal and milk or crackers. Avoid feeding a heavy meal within 1 to 2 hours of bedtime, as this can interfere with sleep. Helping your teen maintain a proper diet will aid in his or her overall health. Have your teen eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grain cereals and breads, rice, pasta, fish and poultry. Breakfast should not be skipped. Avoid fried foods and limit the intake of fats.

## **Don't smoke and avoid alcohol.**

Nicotine is also a stimulant and can disturb sleep. Every effort should be made not to smoke at all – for overall health reasons – but if your teen does smoke, he or she should not smoke within an hour or so of bedtime. Use of alcohol, sleeping pills, or other over-the-counter sleep

aids all may disrupt sleep. See your doctor if your teen is using these products to help with sleep.

### **Include daily "winding-down" time.**

Have your teen set aside up to 1 hour of quiet time before bedtime every night. He or she should use this time for calm and enjoyable activities, such as listening to quiet music, reading a book, or functions that let the mind and body relax. TV watching, computer gaming, any screen time (mobile devices), exercising, or heavy studying should not be part of quiet time. The last several minutes of quiet time activity may take place in the room where your teen sleeps. The bed however, should be used only for sleeping so that firm associations of bed and sleep can be built up in the mind.

### **Make the bedroom an inviting, relaxing environment.**

Your teen's bedroom should be quiet, comfortable (< 75° F), and dark. A teen's bedroom should be clean, uncluttered and relaxing. This will ensure your teen a better night's sleep and improved daytime performance. Again, the bed itself should only be used for sleep— not as a place to read, study or play.

### **Maintain a regular wake up time.**

Your teen's bed time and wake up time should be about the same every day of the week, regardless if it is a school day or not. A consistent wake up time sets the stage for the rest of the day and allows adequate sleep pressure to build up by late evening to allow for quicker sleep onset. It keeps your teen's biological clock organized and ensures he or she does not live as if "jet-lagged" all week long.

### **Make a doctor's appointment.**

Make a doctor's appointment for your teen if he or she has difficulties falling asleep, snores, or tells you he or she is excessively sleepy during the day.

#### **Additional Sleep Information and Suggested Readings**

- Mindell, JA and Owens, JA. *A Clinical Guide to Pediatric Sleep: Diagnosis and Management of Sleep Problems*. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 2003.
- [www.sleepeducation.com](http://www.sleepeducation.com) and other educational links on the American Academy of Sleep Medicine website [www.aasmnet.org](http://www.aasmnet.org).
- The National Sleep Foundation at [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org).

© Copyright 1995-2013 The Cleveland Clinic Foundation. All rights reserved.

#### **Can't find the health information you're looking for?**

- [Ask a Health Educator, Live!](#)

*This information is provided by the Cleveland Clinic and is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or health care provider. Please consult your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. This document was last reviewed on: 7/3/2013...#14310*