

## Seven Sleep-Smart Tips for Teens

1. Sleep is food for the brain: Get enough of it, and get it when you need it. Even mild sleepiness can hurt your performance -- from taking school exams to playing sports or video games. Lack of sleep can make you look tired and feel depressed, irritable, and angry.
2. Keep consistency in mind: Establish a regular bedtime and wake time schedule, and maintain it during weekends and school (or work) vacations. Don't stray from your schedule frequently, and never do so for two or more consecutive nights. If you must go off schedule, avoid delaying your bedtime by more than one hour, awaken the next day within two hours of your regular schedule, and, if you are sleepy during the day, take an early afternoon nap.
3. Learn how much sleep you need to function at your best. You should awaken refreshed, not tired. Most adolescents need between 8.5 and 9.25 hours of sleep each night. Know when you need to get up in the morning, and then calculate when you need to go to sleep to get at least 8.5 hours of sleep a night.
4. Get into bright light as soon as possible in the morning, but avoid it in the evening. The light helps to signal to the brain when it should wakeup and when it should prepare to sleep.
5. Understand your circadian rhythm. Then, you can try to maximize your schedule throughout the day according to your internal clock. For example, to compensate for your "slump (sleepy) times," participate in stimulating activities or classes that are interactive, and avoid lecture classes or potentially unsafe activities, including driving.
6. After lunch (or after noon), stay away from coffee, colas with caffeine, and nicotine, which are all stimulants. Also avoid alcohol, which disrupts sleep.
7. Relax before going to bed. Avoid heavy reading, studying, and computer games within one hour of going to bed. Don't fall asleep with the television on -- flickering light and stimulating content can inhibit restful sleep. If you work during the week, try to avoid working night hours. If you work until 9:30 pm, for example, you will need to plan time to "chill out" before going to sleep.

## Become a sleep-smart trendsetter!

- Be a bed head, not a dead head. Understand the dangers of insufficient sleep -- and avoid them! Encourage your friends to do the same. Ask others how much sleep they've had lately before you let them drive you somewhere. Remember: Friends don't let friends drive drowsy.
- Brag about your bedtime. Tell your friends how good you feel after getting more than 8 hours of sleep!
- Do you study with a buddy? If you're getting together after school, tell your pal you need to catch a nap first, or take a nap break if needed. (Taking a nap in the evening may make it harder for you to sleep at night, however.)
- Say no to all-nighters. Staying up late can cause chaos to your sleep patterns and your ability to be alert the next day ... and beyond. Remember, the best thing you can do to prepare for a test is to get plenty of sleep. All nighters or late-night study sessions might seem to give you more time to cram for your exam, but they are also likely to drain your brainpower.



# SLEEP POINTERS FOR PARENTS

1. Educate yourself about adolescent development, including physical and behavioral changes you can expect, including those that relate to their sleep needs and patterns.
2. Look for signs of sleep deprivation (insufficient sleep) and sleepiness in your child -- keep in mind that they are not always obvious. Signs include difficulty waking in the morning, irritability late in the day, falling asleep spontaneously during quiet times of the day, and sleeping for extra long periods on the weekends. In addition, sleepiness can also look similar to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Above all, don't allow any family member to drive when sleep deprived or drowsy.
3. Enforce regular sleep schedules for all children and maintain appropriate schedules as they grow older. To help induce sleepiness in adolescents, establish a quiet time in the evening when the lights are dimmed and loud music is not permitted.
4. Talk with your children about their individual sleep/wake schedules and level of sleepiness. Assess the time spent in extracurricular and employment activities with regard to their sleep patterns and needs, and make adjustments if necessary.
5. Encourage your children to complete a sleep diary for 7 to 14 consecutive (and typical) days. The diary can provide immediate information on poor sleep hygiene, and it can be used to measure the effectiveness of efforts to change. Be sure to share the sleep logs or diaries with any sleep experts or other health professional who later assesses your child's sleep or sleepiness. (Why not keep your own sleep diary as well?)
6. If your child's sleep schedule during vacation is not in sync with the upcoming school schedule, help him or her adjust it for a smooth transition. This process can take from several days to several weeks, so plan ahead!
7. If conservative measures to shift your child's circadian rhythm are ineffective, or if your child practices good sleep hygiene and still has difficulty staying awake at times throughout the day:
  - Consult a sleep expert. Excessive daytime sleepiness can be a sign of narcolepsy, apnea, periodic limb movement disorder and other serious but treatable sleep disorders.
  - Discuss with teachers and school officials ways to accommodate your child's needs, if necessary. Excessive daytime sleepiness due to sleep disorders or other medical conditions should be referred to your family doctor.
8. Be a good role model: Make sleep a high priority for yourself and your family and practice good sleep hygiene. Listen to your body. If you are often sleepy, get more sleep at night, take naps, or sleep longer when possible. Consult a sleep expert if needed.
9. Actively seek positive changes in your community by increasing public awareness about sleep and the harmful effects of sleep deprivation, and by supporting sleep-smart policies. Request sleep education in school curricula at all levels and encourage your school district to provide optimal environments for learning, including adopting healthy and appropriate school start times for all students.

A National Sleep Foundation poll shows that most parents have heard their children complain of being tired during the day. Find out more.

