

TEENAGERS AND SLEEP



The following contains some excerpts from the National Sleep Foundation's report entitled [Adolescent Sleep Needs and Patterns](http://www.sleepfoundation.org/content/hottopics/sleep_and_teens_report1.pdf). For more information, you can read the full report at http://www.sleepfoundation.org/content/hottopics/sleep_and_teens_report1.pdf

Does your teenager have trouble getting up in the morning? Does he or she become irritable late in the day, fall asleep spontaneously during quiet times of the day or sleep for extra long periods on the weekends? The chances are good that your teenager is not getting enough sleep. The average teen gets between 6 and 7 hours of sleep per night. The amount of sleep they actually need is closer to 9 hours per night.

Studies suggest that sleep loss may be associated with a decreased ability to control, inhibit or change emotional responses. Some signs of sleepiness, such as inability to stay focused on a task, impulsivity, difficulty “sitting still,” and problems completing tasks, resemble behaviors common also in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Many sleep deprived teens “exist in a kind of gray cloud that can affect mood, behavior, schoolwork, and reaction time” according to Mary Carskadon, PhD of Brown University. This can lead to negative feelings, depression, or a general flatness in their ability to enjoy life. In addition, a North Carolina state study found that drivers age 25 or younger cause more than one-half (55 percent) of fall-asleep crashes.

Researchers have identified several changes in sleep patterns, sleep/wake systems and circadian timing systems associated with puberty. For example, even when an adolescent's schedule provides for optimal amounts of sleep, daytime sleepiness increases. In addition, adolescents' sleep patterns undergo a phase delay, that is, a tendency toward later times for both sleeping and waking. A typical student's natural time to fall asleep is 11:00pm or later.

TIPS FOR BETTER SLEEP

- ✓ Stay away from stimulants (colas, tea, coffee, as well as nicotine) after lunch.
- ✓ Establish a regular bedtime and waketime schedule, and maintain it during weekends and vacations. Never stray from your schedule 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.
- ✓ Go into a bright light as soon as possible in the morning but avoid it in the evening. The light helps to signal the brain when it should wake up and when it should prepare to sleep.
- ✓ Try to use your bed only for sleeping. Don't do homework, listen to music, or watch TV while in bed.
- ✓ Don't fall asleep with the television on – flickering light can inhibit restful sleep.
- ✓ If you can't fall asleep, get up and go into another room until you feel sleepy.