

Cultural Daily

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Pointers for Parents: Is your teen getting enough sleep?

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Living with a teenager, especially when they hit that point of exponential growth, brings its own set of challenges. Have you noticed your teen is experiencing difficulty waking in the morning and being irritable late in the day? Is he/she falling asleep during quiet times in the day and sleeping for extra long periods on the weekends? These are all signs of insufficient sleep in teens.

Research tells us that [inadequate sleep among teenagers](#) can lead to reduced attention and impaired memory, resulting in unsatisfactory student progress and lowering grades. Sleep deprivation can also influence mood and lead to emotional problems, increasing the risk of mental illness. More alarmingly, chronic sleep deprivation is a significant risk factor for obesity, Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and more.


So, every parent knows that getting to bed on time and getting enough good sleep can do wonders for his/her child's health, both mentally and physically. But, what can you do to be sure your child gets enough sleep to be healthy and perform at his or her best? Read the most important pointers to help your child sleep better.

Let Teenagers Sleep In

First of all, parents need to understand why teenagers have a particularly hard time getting enough sleep. Namely, during puberty, many biological actions are taking place, from a growth spurt, the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics, achieving fertility to profound psychological changes. Much work takes place also in teenage brains. During this period, there are major changes happening to thinking, emotions, behavior and interpersonal relationships. Within these years, your child's sleep patterns change and has different sleep-wake rhythms. Specifically, the brain produces melatonin (a natural hormone which prepares the body for sleep) at a different time of the day. This makes evening sleepiness takes longer to occur, and your child feels tired and ready for bed later in the evening. It can keep him/her awake into the night and make it difficult for him/her to get up the next morning.

The fact that teenagers are still growing and their brains are still developing, also means that they need more sleep than adults. Thus it is understandable for parents to ask what optimal sleep times should be introduced to support adolescent health? Experts suggest that those [between 13 and 18 years of age should sleep 8 to 10 hours](#) per 24 hours regularly to promote optimal health. Sleeping nine or more hours has been associated with better life satisfaction, fewer health complaints and better quality family relationships for teens.

Make Their Bedroom a Relaxed Sanctuary

Teenager's bedroom should be comfortable (< 75° F), ventilated and quiet. Moreover, clean, uncluttered and relaxing sleep sanctuary will ensure your teen a better night's sleep and improved daytime performance. Most importantly, invest in a comfortable bed. Everybody feels comfy on different types of mattresses and different kinds of pillows. It is a matter of personal preference, but if it fits your child's body and gives him/her a good night's sleep - it is the right one. [caption id="attachment_65938" align="alignnone" width="600"]

For the family budget, an essential factor when it comes to choosing a mattress is its value. Many parents think that an expensive mattress might not be a good investment since teens are likely to outgrow their bed by the time they reach adulthood. However, since your child can develop health issues if he/she does not get the proper support while sleep, [investing in the best mattress is crucial for securing quality sleep](#). Another vital element for a good night sleep is the bedding. Choose sheets and pillowcases that feel good on the skin. Cotton is usually the best and most popular fabric due to its softness and the ability to absorb moisture. These properties allow the body to stay warm in cold weather and cool in warm weather. Last but not least, the bed itself should only be used for sleep— not as a place to read, study or play.

Setting Bedtimes and Calming Pre-sleep Routine

Your teenager may spend 9 hours in bed, but that doesn't necessarily mean that he/she slept that amount. Having a regular sleep schedule will help your child achieve better and more consistent sleep. To maximize the health benefits, they should spend at least 85 percent of their time in bed asleep.

Parents can help their teens achieve the recommended hours of sleep by securing they are engaging in relaxing family activities with them in the evening. One of the most important things you can do is to ensure that your child has at least 30 minutes of screen-free time before going to sleep. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) in 2017 survey revealed that 43 % of high-school students are hooked up on their electronics (playing computer or video games) for more than three hours on an average school night. Screen time shortens the time available for rest and the blue light emitted by TVs, tablets, and smartphones suppress the body's secretion of melatonin. Overdosing on screens at night tells the brain it is still daytime, delaying the body's cues to sleep even further. Before bedtime, make sure everyone is leaving their phones at a charging pad away from the bedrooms.

Encourage Active Days and Healthy Diet

Research shows that physical activity during the day, along with bedtimes protects teenagers' sleep. Encourage your teen to be active during the day. Half an hour to an hour of exercise, at least four times a week will lead not just to better fitness, but also better sleep. It is recommended to exercise at least three hours before bedtime. The scientific reason behind this is the fact that body temperatures rise during exercise. It takes as long as 6 hours to begin to drop. Since cooler body temperatures are associated with sleep onset, it is vital to allow the body time to cool off before sleep.

A diet consisting of healthy and regular meals and snacks can boost your child's intake of important nutrients. However, a healthy diet also influences the quality of sleep. It is widely known that late-night eating should be avoided; however, sleep experts recommend that some types of

food like bananas, honey, almonds, oats can actually help you sleep better. More importantly, no caffeine a couple of hours before bedtime! This commonly known fact gets often forgotten by teenagers. Take time to remind them that caffeine can be hidden in some of their favorite sodas and snacks. Also, make sure to get your teen into the habit of monitoring caffeine intake throughout the day. If they are craving something hot to drink, recommend a warm cup of herbal tea.

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