



Middle School Guidance Officer Report



Sleep and Teenagers:

Sleep and sleep patterns start to change during adolescence. But your teenage child still needs to get enough good-quality sleep. Simple, healthy daytime and bedtime habits can help your child get the sleep they need. One study found that over 90% of children do not get the recommended amount of sleep on school nights.

How much sleep do teenagers need?

Teenagers need **8-10 hours of sleep** each night. This means teenagers still need more sleep than adults to be at their best during the day and it's not just about how much sleep teenagers get. It's also about **how well they sleep**, and how much deep sleep they get. Deep sleep is the most restful phase of sleep. It's very **common for children in the early teen years to begin to want to go to bed later** at night and get up later in the morning. This is because they start to secrete **melatonin** later at night than they did in earlier childhood, which affects their **circadian rhythm**. Also, as their brains mature during puberty, children can stay awake for longer.

Helping teenagers sleep better:

You can help your teenage child get the good-quality sleep they need by looking at **what they do during the day**, as well as at night. In particular, your child needs to eat regular, healthy meals, enjoy positive social relationships, and get regular physical activity. Good daytime habits can help your child avoid sleep problems, especially as they get towards the later teen years. These habits can also help your child sort out any sleep problems that come up.

Routines:

- Encourage your child to go to bed and get up around the same time every day.
- Keep wake-up times on school days and weekends to within two hours of each other. This can help get your child's body clock into a regular rhythm and keep it there.
- Encourage your child to get out of bed when they wake up, rather than trying to go back to sleep.
- Allow plenty of time (for example, 40 minutes) for your child to wind down before bed. Good wind-down activities are warm baths, warm milk drinks, writing in a journal, reading a book or magazine, and listening to quiet music.
- Encourage your child to keep daytime naps to no more 20 minutes and make sure the nap is in the early afternoon. Longer and later naps can make it harder to get to sleep at night.



Your child's sleep environment:

- Turn off loud music, mobile phones, computer screens and TV at least one hour before bedtime. Late-night phone calls, text messages and social media use can mean broken sleep, so encourage your child to connect with friends during the day instead.
- Check your child's sleep space. A quiet, dimly lit space is important for good sleep.
- Ensure your child feels safe at night. Praise and reward any signs of bravery if your child is fearful. Avoid scary TV shows, movies, computer games or books. Some children with major bedtime fears sleep better with a night light or a personal alarm under their pillow.
- If your child is 'clock watching', encourage them to turn the clock around or move it.
- If your child has trouble going to sleep sometimes, suggest they gets up and do something relaxing like reading. When they feel tired, they can go back to bed.

Good health and nutrition:

- Make sure your child has a satisfying evening meal at a reasonable time. Feeling hungry or too full before bed might make them feel alert or uncomfortable.
- Encourage your child to get as much natural light as possible during the day, especially in the morning. This will help their body produce melatonin at the right times in their sleep cycle.
- Make sure your child has a [healthy breakfast](#). Tired adolescents are less likely to eat, but even a light breakfast helps to kick-start the body clock. This helps the body feel ready for sleep at the right time at night.
- Encourage your child to avoid caffeine (in energy drinks, coffee, tea, chocolate and cola) – especially in the late afternoon and evening.
- Encourage your child to do some physical activity during the day, but not too late at night. Extra stimulation and body heat can make it harder to get to sleep.

Worries and anxieties:

- If your child has worries that keep them awake at night, try talking about them together during the day. You could work together on a problem solving approach for the worries.
- Encourage your child to write anxious thoughts in a journal, which might help to clear their head.

You can be a healthy sleep role model for your child – for example, by winding down before bed, relaxing and managing stress, and reducing your use of stimulants like caffeine before bedtime.

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