



Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free

Talk early and often about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Even when it gets tough.

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Know! Sleep is Fuel for Life



March 10th-16th is Sleep Awareness Week: How well is your child sleeping?

Sleep is food for the brain particularly for adolescents in the critical stages of physical, emotional, and intellectual development. Less than 15% of teens get the sleep their bodies and minds need to fuel that growth, and that's a big problem. Sleep deprivation poses a serious threat to our children's health, safety, and academic success.

For children 10 to 12 years old, the National Sleep Foundation recommends 9-12 hours of sleep each night; for 14 to 18-year-olds they need to be getting somewhere between 8-10 hours nightly.

To figure out what time they should be getting to sleep, you can work backwards from what time they need to go to bed. If your 11-year-old needs to be awake by 6 a.m., they should go to bed between 6 and 9 p.m.

When children are pre-teens, hitting that target is less of an issue. However, it can be quite challenging for a teen who gets up at 6 a.m. for school to get to bed by 9 p.m. It's tricky because not only do many teens' activities and homework prevent them from heading to bed that early, but so do their internal clocks.

Michael Breus, Ph. D., also known as The Sleep Doctor, says, "During adolescence, teens experience a biological



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shift to a later sleep-wake cycle. For teens, melatonin release occurs later in the evening—usually around 11 p.m.—and drops later in the morning.” Melatonin is a hormone released in the brain that lets your body know when it is time to sleep and wake—which explains why adolescents fight to stay up later, but then have to be dragged out of bed for school in the early morning.

Even with the unique sleep-wake cycle teens experience, we must find a way to help them get the sleep they desperately need. Dr. Breus says youth who are short on sleep are at risk for a long list of intellectual, social, emotional, and behavioral problems.

The Sleep Doctor links insufficient sleep in teens to:

Cognitive issues

- Trouble with memory
- Diminished focus and attention
- Difficulty learning
- Poor judgment and decision making
- Reduced ability to problem solve

Behavioral and social issues

- Greater tendency to engage in risky behaviors, including smoking, drinking, and drug use
- Hyperactivity
- Aggressiveness, more prone to violence
- Social withdrawal
- Difficulty getting along with others

Emotional issues

- Irritability and impaired moods
- More negative attitude and outlook
- Trouble controlling emotions
- Greater risks for depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts

Academic and performance issues

- Lower grades
- Poor academic performance
- More frequent absence and tardiness

Working to avoid these negative outcomes is important. Dr. Breus says it is key to engage your child in creating a sleep plan you both can live with. He also says it is essential to talk with your child about the importance of sleep and to help them understand that the things they want to accomplish in their lives are fueled by sleep. Let's take a look at what we can do to help them get the quantity and quality of sleep they need.

Here are the National Sleep Foundation's Top Ten:

1. Stick to a sleep schedule of the same bedtime and wake up time, even on the weekends (try to keep it within an hour of the usual wake time).
2. Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual, like reading or listening to quiet music.

3. If you have trouble sleeping, avoid naps, especially in the afternoon.
4. Exercise daily, but not too close to bedtime.
5. Evaluate your room. It should be cool, dark, and quiet.
6. Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillow(s)—with clean sheets.
7. Avoid bright light in the evening and exposure yourself to sunlight first thing in the morning.
8. Avoid caffeine in the evening and large meals before bedtime.
9. Help your body shift into sleep mode. Spend the hour before bedtime winding down. Steer clear of electronic devices that stimulate the brain.
10. If you can't sleep, go into another room and do something relaxing until you feel tired.

When it comes to those pesky electronic devices, it is best to charge them in your room away from the bed at night to eliminate your child's temptation to reach out or respond to late night messages.

Getting proper sleep is vital, and healthy sleep habits can make all the difference in your teen's quality of life. If your child is experiencing trouble getting the quantity or quality of sleep they need, do not hesitate to contact your physician or specialist for help.

Sources: [Michael Breus, PhD, The Sleep Doctor: Teens Need More Sleep Than You Think. Mar.30, 2017.](#) [Michael Breus, PhD, The Sleep Doctor. Psychology Today: What Modern Science Says About Teen Sleep - Teenage sleep is a unique time in the sleep lifecycle. Jan 17, 2019.](#) [National Sleep Foundation: Healthy Sleep Tips.](#)