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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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Know! To Send Them to Bed

School is back in session, or will be soon, depending on where you live and your specific school district. The joy of staying up late and sleeping in has come to a screeching halt for our children, and parents are faced with the daunting task of dragging tired teens out of bed each weekday morning. Chances are, they won't be getting enough sleep, especially once the homework and after-school activities kick into high gear. Sleep patterns naturally shift toward later sleeping and waking times during adolescence, so our teens' bodies will likely fight an earlier bedtime, making it even more difficult for them to get the 8-10 hours of sleep they desperately need for developmental health and well-being.

Lack of sleep not only leaves children cranky, but it can negatively impact mental health and substance use. In a National Sleep Foundation (NSF) study, a significant number of teens who said they weren't getting the recommended amount of sleep, reported feeling unhappy, sad or depressed; felt hopeless about the future; felt nervous or tense; and/or said they worried too much. The research clearly showed that lack of sleep affects mood, and a depressed mood can lead to further sleep deprivation.

Sleep deprived youth are also at greater risk for turning to substances for "help." Exhausted teens who constantly struggle to get moving in the morning may try popping a "wake-up" pill or may go for a highly caffeinated energy drink. A few of these pills or beverages to keep them going throughout the day will then lead to problems falling asleep at night. What then? Unfortunately many will then turn to alcohol or sleeping pills. It becomes an unhealthy, vicious cycle that can then lead to additional mental health issues and addiction.

According to Nationwide Children's Hospital, sleep deprivation has a number of other negative consequences that your teen needs to be aware of as well:

- **Mood** - Sleep deprivation causes teens to be moody, irritable and cranky, making it difficult for them to regulate their mood,

thereby causing them to become frustrated and more easily upset.

- **Behavior** - Teenagers who are sleep deprived are also more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors, such as drinking, driving fast and engaging in other dangerous activities.
- **Cognitive ability** - Inadequate sleep can result in problems with attention, memory, decision making, reaction time and creativity.
- **Academic performance** - Studies show that youth who get less sleep are more apt to get poor grades in school, fall asleep in school and have school tardiness/absences.
- **Drowsy driving** - Teens are at the highest risk for falling asleep at the wheel. Drowsy driving is most likely to occur in the middle of the night (2-4 AM), or mid-afternoon (3-4 PM).

In fact, a sleep-deprived person who gets behind the wheel is said to be equally as dangerous as a driver whose blood/alcohol level is .08 – which is the illegal level for the operation of a motor vehicle in all 50 states; and at a .08 BAC level, a person is 11 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash.

You can also share with your teen that not getting enough sleep makes them more prone to pimples and other skin issues as well as weight gain – that might grab their attention.

Now that we've talked about the importance of teens getting the right amount of shut-eye; in the following tip, we'll provide information on how they can use their senses to achieve optimal sleep.

Source: [Drowsy Driving – National Sleep Foundation: Detection and Prevention](#). [National Sleep Foundation: How Much Sleep Do We Really Need?](#). [Nationwide Children's Hospital: Sleep in Adolescents \(13-18 Years\)](#).

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