

Sleep Tips For Teens

Sleep is a basic necessity of life that is as important to our health and well being as food and water. When you sleep well, you wake up feeling refreshed, alert and ready to face the day. When you don't sleep well, every part of your life can suffer. Research says that teenagers need about 9 hours of sleep on average to be fully alert during the day. This amount of sleep time is often difficult for teens to get due to their early school start time, after-school activities, homework demands, and possibly even work or social schedules for older teens. The following tips may help you sleep better.

1. **Stick to a sleep schedule.** Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day—even on the weekends.
2. **Relax before bed.** Take time to unwind. A relaxing activity, such as reading or listening to music, should be part of your bedtime ritual. Don't do homework or use electronic devices in bed.
3. **Exercise is great, but not too late in the day.** Try to exercise at least 30-60 minutes at least four days a week. The earlier in the day, the better.
4. **Create a sleep-conducive environment.** Keep your room dark, quiet and cool (about 68°). The darker the better. Consider using blackout curtains, eyeshades, earplugs, "white noise," humidifiers and fans if you are bothered by noise.
5. **Take a hot bath before bed.** The drop in body temperature after the bath may help you feel sleepy, and the bath can help you relax.
6. **Have the right sunlight exposure.** Daylight is key to regulating daily sleep patterns. Try to get outside in natural sunlight for at least 30 minutes each day, especially in the morning.
7. **Don't lie in bed awake.** If you find yourself still awake after staying in bed for more than 20 minutes, get up and do some relaxing activity until you feel sleepy. The anxiety of not being able to sleep can make it harder to fall asleep.
8. **Don't go to bed hungry, but keep it light.** Have a light snack such as a glass of milk, a piece of fruit, or cereal. Avoid any heavy meals.
9. **Avoid caffeine (e.g., coffee or soft drinks) close to bedtime.** Caffeine is a stimulant and typically remains in the body for 3 to 5 hours, but it can affect some people longer.
10. **Be productive, take a nap.** Naps are great, however, should be limited to no more than 20-30 minutes and should be taken in the early afternoon only. Napping too long or too late in the afternoon makes it difficult to fall asleep at bedtime.
11. **Go to bed early when you're ill.** Even an hour earlier each night can help give your body the sleep it needs to get well. Be sure to plan for this added sleep time if you have to get up early for school.
12. **See a doctor if you continue to have trouble sleeping.** If you consistently find yourself feeling tired or not well rested during the day despite spending enough time in bed at night, you may have a sleep disorder such as advanced sleep phase syndrome. Your family doctor or a sleep specialist should be able to help you.