

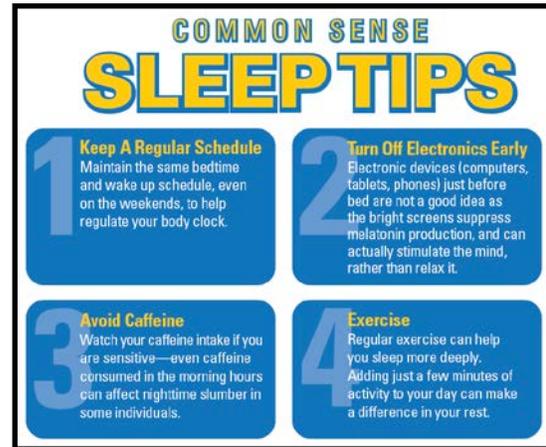
Fighting Your Teen's Sleep Deprivation

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Sleep is essential for the health, productivity and quality of life for all people. This is especially true for teenagers, whose bodies and brains continue to grow and develop during adolescence. Hormones that are important for development are released during sleep. Therefore, getting enough sleep is critical for teens. While most adolescents need 8 to 10 hours of sleep every night, the average teen gets only about seven hours—and many get even less. **Why don't they just go to bed earlier?**

Because of a natural delay in their sleep-wake cycle, most teenagers are most likely wide-awake between 9 and 10 p.m. and biologically unlikely to fall asleep until 11:00 p.m. or later. In order to get enough sleep, this later bedtime can cause teens to sleep later in the morning, often until after 8 a.m.

Teenagers' natural sleep-wake cycle often conflicts with school, work and social schedules. This leaves them tired, moody, impatient and less alert. Sleep-deprived teens are more likely to have difficulty paying attention, making decisions and taking tests. They are also more likely to report symptoms of depression and get into fall-asleep automobile crashes.



Here are some tips to help your teen get the sleep he or she needs:

- Encourage them to make sleep a priority just like exercise and nutrition for proper health and development.
- Discuss age-appropriate schedules for you and your family and work to maintain them. Set a good example.
- Talk to them about the importance of sleep and the consequences of sleep deprivation.
- Help them keep a regular bed and wake time during the week.
- Restrict the use of sleep-disturbing products such as coffee or energy drinks. Consuming caffeine late in the day can disturb sleep many hours later.
- Look for signs of sleep deprivation including difficulty waking in the morning, irritability and daytime sleepiness.
- Create a home environment that will promote sleep close to bedtime. For instance, keep lights dim in the evening and set limits on television watching, computer use and video games late at night.
- Encourage your children to keep a sleep diary for two weeks and share it with you to get a better sense of their sleep habits and any alertness issues.
- Talk to your teenager about the dangers of driving while sleepy and explain that it's just as serious as drinking and driving.
- Consult a sleep specialist if you think your child may have a sleep disorder such as sleep apnea.

Should teens be encouraged to nap? Many teens nap when they come home from school or whenever they get a chance. For some, napping can make up for lost sleep or restore alertness. This effect, however, has limits and caution should be taken particularly if a teen will be driving at night. Napping can be useful as long as it does not result in later bed times and reduced sleep overall.