

Insomnia, Sleep Troubles & Sleep Hygiene:

Teens (13-18 years)

Introduction

According to Sleep Foundation (2023), sleep is essential for teenagers as it plays a key role in their physical and mental development. **Teenagers should be getting about 8-10 hours of sleep per night.** Unfortunately, research indicates that teens often get far less sleep than they need. This age group faces several challenges that make it challenging to get consistent, restorative sleep. Recognizing these obstacles can be key in helping your child get the rest they need!



Why is Sleep Important?

Getting the right amount of sleep can help teens thrive in the following areas:

Thinking & Academic Achievement. Sleep promotes attention, memory, and analytical thought. It helps keep our thinking sharp and assists our brain in consolidating important information. Whether your child is studying for an exam, learning how to drive, or acquiring job skills, sleep is critical!

Mental & Emotional Health. Teenagers experience many phase of life stressors, such as new social relationships, responsibilities, and independence. While it's natural for these things to be challenging, lack of sleep can intensify your teen's emotional reactions. For example, increased stress, irritability, or even anxiety and depression.

Physical Health & Development. Essential parts of physical development take place during adolescent and teenage years. Sleep promotes healthy functioning in nearly every bodily system, enables tissue and muscle recovery, and helps regulate hormones.

Decision-Making & Behavior. The frontal lobe (the part of the brain that controls impulsive behavior) is not fully developed until early adulthood. Sleep deprivation affects not only the development of the frontal lobe, but the types of decisions teenagers make. For example, lack of sleep can lead to high-risk behaviors like drunk driving, texting while driving, substance use,

risky sexual behavior, or fighting. Poor sleep can also leave teenagers more prone to accidents or unsafe situations, like drowsy or distracted driving.

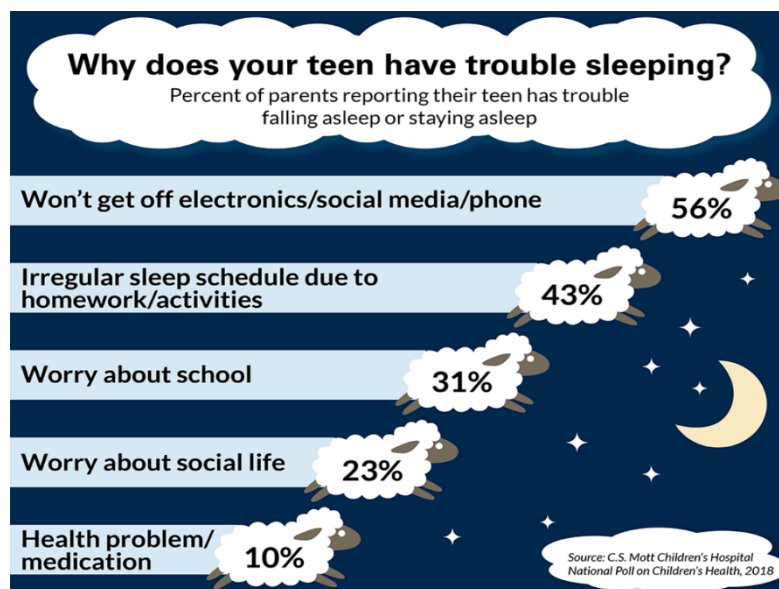
Teens & Barriers to Sleep

Delayed Sleep Schedule. Experts have found that teenagers' sleep drives build slowly, meaning they don't typically feel tired until later in the day. With melatonin also being produced later, many teens turn into "night owls," wanting to stay up later and sleep longer in the mornings. Unfortunately, most teens have to get up early for school, causing a break in their sleep-wake cycle and preventing them from getting adequate sleep.

Demanding Daytime Activities. School assignments, sports, work, household chores, and social engagements can jam-pack a teenager's schedule. These things tend to take precedent over getting good sleep, leading teens to stay up late to try and meet all demands and expectations.

Electronic Devices. Use of cell phones, tablets, or computers has shown to be disruptive to sleep for several reasons. Screen time can be stimulating, suppress melatonin production, and incoming notifications can interrupt sleep. This barrier for teenagers is especially problematic, as research shows that **89% or more of teens keep at least one electronic device in their bedroom at night!**

Mental Health Conditions. Some teens struggle to get adequate sleep due to an underlying mental health or medical condition. At the same time, poor sleep can contribute to or worsen symptoms. Anxiety, depression, ADHD, or even sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, and narcolepsy are a few to be mindful of.



Tips & Strategies for Better Sleep:

What Teens Can Do:	What Parents Can Do:
Create a bedtime routine for yourself that promotes relaxation.	Prioritize sleep for everyone by creating family rules, like making bedrooms an

	electronic free zone or charging all phones in the same place.
Get 8-10 hours of sleep each night, and keep a consistent sleep schedule (this means during the week AND weekends!)	Work with your teen to avoid overscheduling activities that can add to stress. Aim for realistic and fulfilling, not overwhelming!
Avoid things like caffeine, electronics, homework, or other stimulating activities for at least one hour before bed.	Support your teen by normalizing occasional sleep disturbances. Sleep isn't always instant, especially if life is very stressful.
Don't procrastinate on big tasks or wait until before bed to finish homework, projects, etc. Set a designated, realistic time after school to complete work!	Assist your teen in talking to their doctor or mental health provider if sleep concerns persist. Additional support such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy techniques or in some cases, medication, can be beneficial.

Additional Materials & Resources:

Websites:

Child Mind Institute: <https://childmind.org/article/happens-teenagers-dont-get-enough-sleep/>

Michigan Medicine: <https://www.michiganmedicine.org/health-lab/10-tips-help-your-teen-sleep-better>

Sleep Foundation: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/teens-and-sleep>

Books: The Sleep Solution (Chris Winter, MD), The Sleep-deprived Teen: Why Our Teenagers Are So Tired, and How Parents and Schools Can Help Them Thrive (Lisa L. Lewis), Generation Sleepless: Why Tweens and Teens Aren't Getting Enough Sleep and How We Can Help (Heather Turgeon MFT)

Apps: Calm, Insight Timer, Headspace, Sleep Reset, Sleep Easy

References:

Adapted from: Michigan Medicine (2018)

Adapted from: Sleep Advisor (2023)

Adapted from: Sleep Foundation (2023)