

Teens and sleep

Is your teen getting enough sleep?

Does your teen have difficulty falling asleep at night and waking up in the morning? Do you get frustrated because your teen sleeps until noon on the weekends and teachers tell you he or she falls asleep in class?

Rest assured that you are not the only parent who sees this behavior. Sleep is important to brain development and between homework, part-time jobs and after school activities, most teenagers are sleep deprived.

Studies show that the teenage brain needs about nine hours of sleep for optimal functioning and development. Most teens get an average of seven hours of sleep each night. IN addition, the teenage brain is more active at night, causing teens to stay up late and making it more difficult to get up for school.



The adolescent years are a very important time for brain development because the thinking and reasoning part of the brain is developing and growing through the early 20's. During this time, new brain cells are wired and connect the right and left sides of the brain, increasing intelligence, self-awareness and performance. Teens need to get enough sleep in order for these connections to take place.

Sleep deprivation in teens affects mood and ability to think, perform, and react appropriately. It is important to ensure your teen is getting enough sleep so he or she can achieve optimal growth and development.

What parents can do

- ♥ Work with your teen to set up a sleeping schedule and talk to about the importance of sleep.
- ♥ Talk to your teen's high school and try to schedule less difficult classes in the morning. Sleep deprived teens have the most difficulty concentrating during the morning.
- ♥ Encourage learning. For brains to grow, they need proper stimulation. Try to limit the amount of computer games, Internet surfing, and television.
- ♥ Help your teen find balance. Many teens have daily schedules that are full of activities. While teens need a variety of activities and experiences for their brains to grow, they also need time to relax and refresh.
- ♥ Keep the lines of communication open. Remind your teen often that you are available and willing to discuss problems. Model and encourage healthy eating habits. Make sure plenty of nutritious foods are available and limit the amount of junk food in your home. In addition, talk to your teen about reducing beverages with caffeine in the afternoon and evening.
- ♥ Exercise with your teen. Exercise has many health benefits, including helping people get more restful sleep.
- ♥ Be patient. It can be stressful when your teen wants to sleep in and you want him or her to get up and be active.