

## **Get Some Zzzzzz's!**

As more studies are done on the topic of youth and sleep, we are learning more and more about the role that adequate sleep plays in the formative years of youth. There are studies now that not only prove that youth who do not get enough sleep have difficulty in school, but it also puts them at a higher risk for other health problems in their future. Some of the common health problems that have been associated with youth not getting enough sleep include obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and mental health issues.

Sleep is the process your mind and body need to recharge from the day. Sleep is a key factor in helping students with learning and being able to regulate emotional and behavioral factors of their bodies. Some common signs that a student is not getting enough sleep include struggling in school, having trouble with their memory, concentration and motivational abilities, sleeping more often in places they should not be sleeping, involvement in car crashes if they are old enough to drive, and possibly feelings of depression or other mood disorders. With sleep playing such an important role in body and mind development, what are some ways to help students get a better night's sleep?

The biggest factor that can help students get a better night of sleep is to have a relaxing bedtime routine. This helps their body get into a routine and engage in calming activities to help their mind and body slow down at the end of the day. Calming activities include taking a warm bath, reading, listening to soothing music, and having a cool, dark and quiet environment for sleep. In addition to having a bedtime routine, it is also suggested youth have a consistent bedtime and wake up time every day, even on the weekends or days when there is no school.

Another thing students can do to help with sleep is exercise every day. Exercise helps reduce stress and invigorates the body and mind. However, hard or strenuous exercises should be avoided in the evening before bed. Exercising in the evening can stimulate the body and amp you up to the point where you are wide awake. So, it is better to exercise in the morning as a way to wake you up and be ready for the day. Another way to prevent over-stimulation that could inhibit sleep is to limit your caffeine intake. It is suggested to stop drinking caffeinated drinks after the mid-afternoon as this can cause your body to be wide awake and not settle down in time for bed.

Screen time also plays a huge role in inhibiting a student's sleep. Not only is it a distraction that can keep students up, but the screen's lighting can stimulate the brain and make it harder to fall asleep at night. This includes phones, tablets, computers and even T.V.'s. It is suggested screen time be limited in the evening and devices be put away at least two hours before bed.

Sleep is a very important component to the development of youth bodies and minds. Without sleep, youth are not able to regulate emotions and behaviors which can lead to lifelong health struggles. If your student is not getting enough sleep despite your best efforts, it is important to talk to your physician. There could be underlying health issues like sleep apnea, or even some mental health issues, that are contributing to their inability to sleep.

## **References**

Teens and sleep: Why you need it and how to get enough

[https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/healthy-living/teens\\_and\\_sleep](https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/healthy-living/teens_and_sleep)

Sleeping to Succeed

<https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/sleeping-to-succeed/>

Insufficient Sleep in Adolescents and Young Adults: An Update on Causes and Consequences

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2014/08/19/peds.2014-1696.full.pdf>

Why sleep is so important (Kidshelpline)

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/why-sleep-so-important>

CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sleep.htm>