



CENTER FOR ADHD Connection

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Sleep tips for teens

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Most teens do not get enough sleep. Studies show that teens typically get around 7 hours of sleep on school nights, below the optimal 8 to 10 hours recommended. When teens get insufficient sleep, it can negatively impact their behavior, mood, academics, social life and driving. So here are some STOP and START behaviors that can promote better sleep for your teen (and for parents too!).

Good Habits All Day Long

1. **STOP** using the bed for anything but sleep. Avoid using your bed for other activities such as homework or watching Netflix. Only go to bed when you are sleepy, and if you are not asleep in 15 to 20 minutes, you should get out of bed and do something relaxing (not on your phone) until you feel sleepy before getting back into bed. This will keep you from spending too much time in bed tossing and turning instead of sleeping.
2. **START** having a consistent sleep schedule. This is not easy, but work towards waking up and going to bed at the same time every night—including weekends. Bedtime and wake time should not differ day to day by more than an hour.

Good Habits When Getting Ready for Bed

1. **STOP** using technology at least 30 minutes before bed. Technology produces light and can be very stimulating for our brains which keeps us awake. At a minimum, reduce screen brightness and turn on "night mode."
2. **START** a wind down routine 30 minutes before bed. Work to create cues for your body that it is almost time to go to sleep. Establish a routine that begins 30 minutes before bedtime such as listening to soothing music or reading a book, brushing teeth, and getting ready for bed.

Good Habits When Getting Up in the Morning

1. **STOP** hitting the snooze button. Falling back asleep after an alarm can do more harm than good as it starts our sleep cycle over again. This means that the next time the alarm goes off, our bodies are less refreshed because we are in a deeper stage of sleep. Rather than hitting the snooze, consider setting only one alarm (or two at most).
2. **START** exposing yourself to as much (sun)light as soon as possible. Our sleep schedules our closely tied to light. As you get ready in the morning, expose yourself to bright light to help your body wake up (such as opening curtains and raising blinds). Light exposure during the day will also help your body stay awake.

Good Habits During the Day

1. **STOP** taking naps. If falling asleep at night is difficult for you, napping during the day can make this worse. Our body has an "appetite" for sleep that builds up during the day. If you nap during the day you satisfy that hunger which makes it harder to sleep at night.
2. **START** exercising regularly. Light exercise during the day can help to wake us up and keep us up. Additionally, a more strenuous exercise in the late afternoon can help tire us out (but avoid strenuous exercise closer to bedtime).

We recently started a study to test a sleep intervention using these and other tips for adolescents with ADHD who also have sleep problems. For more information, contact the study coordinator at 513-803-9074 or ADHDsleep@cchmc.org.



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