

# Sleep

## Why is sleep important?

Sleep is a state of rest which keeps our brains and bodies working well. Sleep is important for growth, physical healing and some hormone regulation. It also plays a significant role in memory, learning and emotional regulation. Sleeping well, for the right amount of time, helps improve energy levels, mood, concentration, academic performance, and physical performance at games and sports.

There are three ways to think about the sleep we get:

1. How easily we fall asleep.
2. How long we sleep for (quantity).
3. How well we sleep (quality).

These can all be affected by lots of things, including bedroom environment, diet, smoking, drinking, mental health, exercise and mood. They also change naturally depending on our age.

Your body clock is the part of your brain that tells you when to go to sleep and when to wake up. During puberty, young people's body clocks shift later than an adult's body clock, which means they naturally feel more awake later at night. It also means they might struggle to wake up early for school or other early morning activities.

Most teenagers need around eight to 10 hours of sleep a night, but the range of 'normal' is between seven and 11 hours. If a young person is getting less than seven hours sleep most nights, they are probably not getting enough.

## **Tips to help young people sleep better**

- Take time to understand how much sleep they need (different people need different amounts) and when they need to wake up. From that work out a suitable bedtime.
- Limit the time spent lying in bed not sleeping. This might mean having a later bedtime if it helps to fall asleep quicker. If a young person does other activities in bed, such as schoolwork or gaming, encourage them to create different 'zones' in their room, if possible.
- Try to expose them to as much outdoor natural light as possible, especially first thing in the morning.
- Turn down the brightness on any screens in the evening and encourage them to stop using devices at least an hour before bedtime.
- Encourage them to sleep and wake up at the same time every day, including weekends.
- Make bedrooms as dark, quiet, cool and non-stimulating as possible.
- Encourage them to add some regular physical activity during the day, such as a walk, bike ride, sports club or home workout.

- Avoid caffeinated or sugary drinks, especially after lunch.
- Help them build a calm bedtime routine that works for them. This might involve reading, skincare, writing down any worries, stretching or breathing exercises or listening to music.

### **What are the impacts?**

If a young person is consistently not getting enough sleep, they might lack energy and motivation throughout the day, feel irritable, low, or overwhelmed, have mood swings, and struggle to concentrate, remember things, or make decisions. This could affect their relationships, risk-taking behaviour, physical and mental health and how they do at school.

Aside from not getting enough sleep, other sleep problems in adolescence are common and can take many forms, including insomnia, nightmares or sleep terrors, sleepwalking and bedwetting. These problems can often be temporary if sleep behaviours or habits are changed, but it is important to seek help as soon as possible if sleeping issues persist or are causing distress to young people and their families.

### **How to talk to young people about their sleep**

- Understand why a young person might be struggling to sleep. It may be a natural result of their body clock changing, or an underlying reason like worry or anxiety.
- Discuss bedtimes together and help them recognise the benefits of sleep rather than arguing or telling them off.
- Role model positive sleep behaviours, such as a bedtime routine and limiting screen time.
- Ask how you can help improve their sleep. This might involve helping them rearrange their room or cut down on activities and commitments, especially early in the morning.
- Talk about how their sleep pattern may be affected by other family members. This may include sharing a bedroom with a sibling or family members working shift patterns and discuss how the impact may be reduced.
- Talk about whether there is any underlying physical reason they might be struggling to sleep that might require more support, such as period pain, toothache, headaches or incontinence.
- Be consistent. Small changes, for example going to bed 15 minutes earlier, can add up over time.

### **Where can I get local advice and support?**

**ChatHealth** - is a way to text a school nurse to find out about local services and get confidential help and support. Text: 07507 332160. The service is available Monday to Friday from 8:30am-4:30pm (excluding bank holidays). If you live on the Isle of

Wight, or would rather speak to someone face-to-face, you can ask your school or college about their nursing service.

**Hampshire CAMHS** - has an online guide with advice and tips to sleep better, as well as links to self-help guides and apps: [Click here](#).

**Health for Teens** - has a section on their website about sleep, including videos, podcasts, and tips on how to retrain your brain to sleep: [Click here](#).

**Kooth** - If a young person is struggling to sleep due to their mental wellbeing, such as anxiety or depression, or lack of sleep is affecting their mental wellbeing they can sign up to Kooth for free online counselling and emotional wellbeing support from qualified counsellors. No referral is required.  
[Click here](#).

If you have concerns about sleep problems, you can also speak to your GP.

### **Where can I get more advice from national resources?**

<i>Link and /or QR code</i>	<i>Description</i>
<a href="#">Teens &amp; Young People - Teen Sleep Hub</a>	<b>Teen Sleep Hub</b> is a website with information about sleep and how to improve it, tips and videos on screen time, routines and making enough time to sleep. They also have a national sleep helpline on 03303 530541.
<a href="#">Sleep Problems   Signs of Sleep Problems</a>	<b>Young Minds</b> has an online guide to sleep problems in young people, including nightmares, anxiety and wetting the bed.
<a href="#">Sleeping - The Mix</a>	<b>The Mix</b> provides support for under 25-year-olds and has a whole section of expert advice on sleep.
<a href="#">Information and advice - ERIC</a>	<b>ERIC</b> is a website for children and teenagers struggling with bowel or bladder problems like bedwetting. It includes information and advice on where to get help and stories from other young people.