







Why is sleep important?

It is recommended that teenagers get 8-10 hours of sleep a night.


- **Brain development**—Sleep strengthens neural connections formed during the day. This is vital for learning, memory and problem-solving.
- **Academic performance**—Sleep helps with focus, attention and creativity. Lack of sleep can impact decision-making and concentration.
- **Emotional regulation and mental health**—Sleep affects regulation of mood. Sleep deprived teenagers are more likely to experience anxiety and depression. Sleep can help young people with management of stress and improve emotional resilience.
- **Physical growth and hormone balance**—Teenagers go through significant hormonal changes during puberty. During sleep the body also releases growth hormones that are essential for physical development.
- **Immune system and physical health**—Sleep supports a healthy immune system, helping to fight off illnesses as well as reducing risks if obesity, diabetes and other health issues.
- **Safety and alertness**—Sleep deprivation can lead to taking more risks and having slower reaction times, which can be dangerous especially if driving or walking when there is a lot of traffic.

How Can Parents/Carers Help?

1. **Encourage a consistent sleep routine**—Help young people to set regular bed times and wake up times (including weekends). Having consistency reinforces the body's natural wake cycle. 
2. **Limit screen time before bed**—Encourage turning off screens at least 30-60 minutes before bed time as blue light can suppress melatonin (the sleep hormone). 
3. **Promote a relaxing bed time routine**—Encourage activities like reading, journaling, listening to relaxing music or an audiobook. Avoid completing intense activities like exercise or gaming before bed. Also, create space for your child to share any worries or anxieties so that these are not stopping them from getting a good night sleep. 
4. **Limit caffeine and sugary snacks**—Limit in take particularly during the afternoon and evening as they can disrupt sleep patterns. 
5. **Help young people to plan their time**—Help make time for activities like homework or physical activity earlier in the evening.
6. **Promote the importance of sleep**—Talk to teens about it's importance in maintaining a good mood, performance and health. Where possible, model healthy routines for your child as they are more likely to follow if they see parents doing the same.

Example of sleep positives. Things to include in a winding down routine

leading to bed:

- Dim lighting 
- Shower or bath
- Listen to soft, slow music
- Focus on positive thoughts for the day
- Lavender oil on the pillow
- Stretches/gentle yoga
- Few minutes of gentle breathing
- Light non-sugary snack if hungry
- Clean face and teeth
- Read for pleasure before lights out
- Write a journal
- Organise things ready for the morning

Example of sleep negatives. Avoid completely 1-2 hours before bedtime:

- Daylight and bright light of any kind
- Screens
- Caffeine and energy



- Strenuous exercise
- Too much food or food that is sugary
- Work
- Fast or loud music
- Alcohol



Further reading and support:

- 'The Teenage Brain' Author and Researcher: <https://nicolamorgan.com/>
- [Mind: Sleep and Mental Health](#)
- A guide for 11-18 year olds
- [Teen Sleep Hub](#)

Helpful information for teens and parents/