



Know! Better Sleep=Better School Performance

Heading back to school is a transition that impacts many aspects of life, including our tweens' and teens' sleep schedules. Sleep, as we know, is fuel for the brain, and getting the right amount of quality sleep is essential to their health.

A good night's sleep is important for everyone but especially our growing and developing children. According to Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, children who regularly get an adequate amount of sleep have improved attention, behavior, learning, memory, and overall mental and physical health. On the flip side, inadequate sleep can lead to high blood pressure, obesity and even depression.

So how much sleep do our tweens and teens need?

- Children 6-12 years old: nine to 12 hours.
- Teenagers 13-18 years old: eight to 10 hours.

It's not just about hitting the numbers though, it's important our children get high-quality sleep. Experts agree there are certain steps we can all take to promote more restful sleep. The Sleep Foundation has broken it down into the following four categories:

Create a Sleep-Inducing Bedroom: This is about a comfortable sleep environment with minimal distractions.

- If financially possible, invest in a quality mattress and pillow, along with comfortable bedding for your child.

- Help them avoid light disruptions with blackout curtains or a sleep mask.
- They can use a fan or white noise machine to drown out abrasive background sounds.
- Find an agreeable sleep temperature for your household. Typically, a cooler room is more suitable for restful sleep.
- Lavender, among other essential oils, is known to help calm, soothe, and ease one into sleep.

Improve Their Sleep Schedule: Helping them take control of their sleep schedule is a big step in acquiring quality sleep.

- While most young people look forward to sleeping in on the weekends, experts agree that sticking to regular wake times is essential in establishing and maintaining a healthy sleep routine.
- When thinking about your child's targeted bedtime, include enough time for them to relax and unwind before preparing for sleep.
- Caution them on napping, as it can interfere with nighttime sleep.

Craft a Pre-Bedtime Routine: Bedtime routines aren't just for little ones.

- Encourage them to wind down for at least a half hour before bed with soothing music, quiet reading, or low impact stretching.
- They should avoid bright lights that stimulate the brain and should disconnect from devices up to an hour before bedtime.

Foster Pro-Sleep Habits During the Day: Pave the way for quality sleep at night by keeping these tips in mind during the day.

- They should throw open those blinds and get a dose of daylight shortly after waking, as our internal clocks are regulated by light exposure.
- Encourage exercise during the day to promote solid sleep at night.
- It's tempting for teens to reach for a soda or energy drink if they are feeling sleepy during the day, but health experts say that approach isn't sustainable and can cause long-term sleep deprivation.
- While schedules can get hectic during the school year, it's important to avoid heavy meals too late in the evening, which makes it harder to fall asleep.
- Their bed should be reserved for sleep only. If possible, homework and hanging out should be done elsewhere, so that their mind develops a strong association between their bed and sleep.

When young people have trouble falling asleep, it's common to think the problem begins once they lie down. However, the time leading up to bedtime is vital to their good night's sleep. Acquiring both quantity and quality sleep promotes improved attention, behavior, learning, memory and overall mental and physical health. While all this can seem overwhelming, it's not an all or nothing approach. Every positive action step you take from above, no matter how small, will be making a difference towards improving your child's sleep and overall health.

Tips For School Personnel

QUALITY SLEEP + SLEEP QUANTITY = IMPROVED CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE

Encourage your students to achieve optimal sleep with these tips:

- Children up to age 12 should get nine to 12 hours of sleep.
- Teens 13 to 18 should get eight to 10 hours of sleep.
- Give yourself at least 30 minutes to wind down before bedtime without electronics.
- Wind down with soothing music or relaxing reading.
- Work to create a comfy bed and bedroom environment.
- Try to wake the same time each day.

If students frequently are sleepy in class, talk about this issue with them and their parents. Ask how long they are spending on homework. If this causes concern, then discuss beneficial homework management strategies.

Sources

[Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, Rachel Dawkins: The Importance of Sleep for Kids. March 12, 2018.](#)

[Sleep Foundation, Eric Suni; Healthy Sleep Tips. July 30, 2020.](#)

[Homework vs. Sleep: A Cause of Stress in Teens \(And Younger Kids\), Dr. Craig Canapari, Aug. 31, 2015.](#)

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