# Sleep Hygiene for Teens Handout

Getting enough quality sleep helps you feel energized and focused throughout the day, boosts your immune system, improves mental health, and enhances physical performance.

But with busy schedules, social media, and schoolwork, getting enough sleep can be tough. Lack of sleep can lead to fatigue, irritability, trouble concentrating, and even depression or anxiety.

Why is sleep important for you?
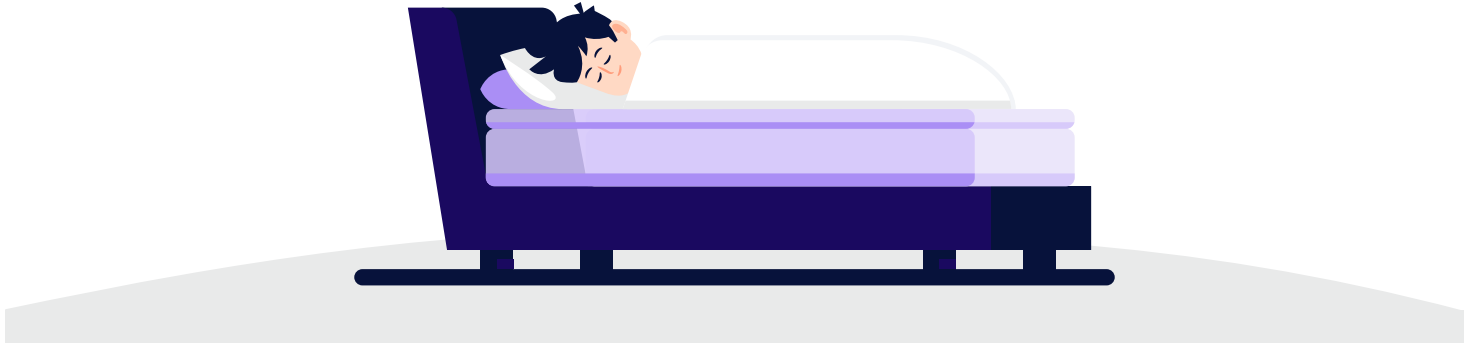
Quality sleep is crucial for you as it affects your physical, emotional, and mental health. Here's why getting enough sleep is essential (Suni & Dimitriu, 2023):

- Growth and development: Sleep helps your body release growth hormones, which are super important during your teenage years. Not getting enough quality sleep can mess with your growth.
- Physical health: Adequate sleep boosts your immune system, making you less likely to get sick. It also supports healthy brain function, helps with weight management, and lowers the risk of developing chronic diseases.
- Decision-making and risky behaviors: Not enough sleep can mess with your decision-making skills and increase the chances of engaging in risky behaviors like substance abuse, unsafe sexual activity, and reckless driving.
- Emotional health: Lack of sleep can lead to mood swings and difficulty managing emotions, which can impact your relationships with friends and family.
- Academic performance: Quality sleep is key for learning and memory. Without enough rest, you might struggle to concentrate and retain information, which can affect your grades.

Reasons you're not getting enough sleep

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) advises that teenagers should get 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night to maintain good health. On average, teens require nine hours of sleep per night (American Academy of Sleep Medicine, 2016).

However, you may struggle to get enough sleep. Here are some common reasons why (American Thoracic Society, n.d.; Suni & Dimitriu, 2023):

Puberty

Puberty is when your body starts going through a lot of changes, including a shift in your natural bedtime and wake time. This can make it tough to fall asleep early and wake up early, leading to a sleep deficit during the school week and making it harder to catch up on weekends.

Technology use

Using technology like smartphones and laptops all the time is pretty common. But the blue light from screens can mess with your melatonin production, making it harder to fall asleep. Plus, the content you watch or read can be stimulating and keep you awake longer.

Busy schedules

Between school, extracurricular activities, and hanging out with friends, your schedule can get pretty packed. This makes it hard to find time for good sleep, and you might end up sacrificing sleep to fit everything in.

Mental health issues

Many teens deal with mental health issues like anxiety and depression, which can make it hard to fall asleep or stay asleep. If you're experiencing symptoms of mental illness that are affecting your sleep, it's important to seek help.

Neurodevelopmental disorders

Conditions like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorder can make it harder to sleep well. Not getting enough sleep can also make the symptoms of these conditions worse.

Tips to improve sleep

Getting enough sleep can help you feel energized and focused and overall improve your physical and mental health. Here are a few tips to help you get a good night's sleep:

- [ ] Allocate eight hours of sleep into your daily routine, maintaining this schedule consistently on both weekdays and weekends.
- [ ] Establish a pre-bed ritual to aid relaxation and facilitate quick sleep onset.
- [ ] Steer clear of caffeine and energy drinks, particularly in the afternoon and evening.
- [ ] Set aside electronic devices at least thirty minutes before bedtime, and keep them on silent mode to avoid nighttime distractions.
- [ ] Choose a supportive mattress that suits your needs for optimal rest.
- [ ] Ensure your bedroom environment is cool, dark, and quiet for the best sleep quality.
- [ ] Seek help if you are struggling with mental health issues or any other underlying conditions that may be affecting your sleep.
- [ ] Practice good stress management techniques, such as deep breathing and mindfulness exercises, to ease racing thoughts before bed.
- [ ] Exercise regularly but avoid intense workouts close to bedtime. Light exercise like yoga or stretching can promote relaxation and better sleep quality.
- [ ] Avoid eating heavy meals or consuming alcohol close to bedtime. These can disrupt your sleep patterns and make it harder to fall asleep.

Additional notes

References

American Academy of Sleep Medicine. (2016, August 16). *Sleep is key to help teens recharge for success this school year.* https://aasm.org/sleep-is-key-to-help-teens-recharge-for-success-this-school-year/

American Thoracic Society. (n.d.). *Healthy sleep in teens.* https://www.thoracic.org/patients/patient-resources/resources/healthy-sleep-in-teens.pdf

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