

Teen Sleep Habits

What Should You Do?



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Almost 70 percent of high school students are not getting the recommended hours of sleep on school nights, according to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Researchers found insufficient sleep (< 8 hours on an average school night) to be associated with a number of unhealthy activities, such as:

- Drinking soda or pop 1 or more times per day (not including diet soda or diet pop)
- Not participating in 60 minutes of physical activity on 5 or more of the past 7 days
- Using computers 3 or more hours each day
- Being in a physical fight 1 or more times
- Cigarette use
- Alcohol use
- Marijuana use
- Current sexual activity
- Feeling sad or hopeless
- Seriously considering attempting suicide

Adolescents not getting sufficient sleep each night may be due to changes in the sleep/wake-cycle as well as everyday activities, such as employment, recreational activities, academic pressures, early school start times, and access to technology.

The National Sleep Foundation recommends that teenagers receive between 8.5 hours and 9.25 hours each night.

The following sleep health tips are recommended by the National Sleep Foundation:

- Go to bed at the same time each night and rise at the same time each morning.
- Make sure your bedroom is a quiet, dark, and relaxing environment, which is neither too hot or too cold.
- Make sure your bed is comfortable and use it only for sleeping and not for other activities, such as reading, watching TV, or listening to music. Remove all TVs, computers, and other “gadgets” from the bedroom.
- Physical activity may help promote sleep, but don’t exercise within a few hours of bedtime.
- Avoid large meals a few hours before bedtime.

If your sleep problems persist or if they interfere with how you feel or function during the day, you should the assistance of a physician or other health professional. Before visiting your physician, consider keeping a diary of your sleep habits for about ten days to discuss at the visit.

Include the following in your sleep diary, when you:

- Go to bed.
- Go to sleep.
- Wake up.
- Get out of bed.
- Take naps.
- Exercise.
- Consume alcohol and how much.
- Consume caffeinated beverages and how much.

More information on Sleep and Sleep Disorders can be found at http://www.cdc.gov/sleep/about_sleep/index.htm

For further information—and a more comprehensive listing of recommended hours of sleep for different age groups—please see the National Sleep Foundation Web site at <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/site>

The study, “Insufficient sleep among high school students associated with a variety of health-risk behaviors”, can be found at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2011.06.020>

An example of a sleep diary can be found at <http://yoursleep.aasmnet.org/pdf/sleepdiary.pdf>