

Sleep Hygiene for Children and Teens

1. Build a Bedtime Routine:

- Children need about 10-11 hours of sleep. Teens need about 9-10 hours.
- Set a regular time for bed each night and stick to it, even on weekends.
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine, such as a warm bath, light reading, gentle stretching, or meditation (for example – imagining being on a beach) before bed.

2. Make after-dinner time a relaxing time. Too much activity close to bedtime can keep kids/teens awake.

3. Avoid feeding children/teens big meals close to bedtime. A small snack can be helpful if they are hungry (for example, one piece of cheese with a few crackers).

- Avoid giving children/teens anything with caffeine within six hours of bedtime, including chocolate and sodas. Try to avoid coffee or energy drinks completely.

4. Set the bedroom temperature so that it's comfortable – cool, but not too cold.

5. Make sure the bedroom is dark and keep the noise level low. If your child/teen does not like the dark, try to use a green glow nightlight. If your child/teen is sensitive to light or sound, try a sleep mask or earplugs. Keep clocks turned away if needed.

6. Avoid naps during the day; it can disturb the normal pattern of sleep and wakefulness. One exception: Younger children require developmentally appropriate naps.

7. Exercise can promote good sleep when engaged in regularly, but vigorous exercise should occur in the morning or late afternoon.

8. Ensure adequate exposure to natural light, especially in the mornings. Natural light exposure helps maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.

9. Try to avoid emotionally upsetting conversations and activities before trying to go to sleep. Don't dwell on, or bring your problems to bed. Schedule a block of time for "worry time" earlier in the day if needed.

10. Associate bed with sleep. It's not a good idea to use the bed to watch TV, use cellphones or tablets/iPads. An additional recommendation is that children/teens not have TVs, computers or cell phones in their bedrooms at night.

11. Try to avoid the use of computers, TV/video games, cellphones or tablets/iPads for two hours prior to bedtime. This also makes it less likely that your child/teen will push for "one more TV program" or "one more video game" before bedtime.

12. Review with your child's/teen's physician whether there are any medicines that may be interfering with the quality of their sleep (such as some asthma medicines and decongestants). Don't be afraid to ask about alternatives.