

Sleep in Teenagers

There are biological changes in adolescents resulting in a delay in sleep onset. The waking time is also typically delayed and so the total sleep time is not necessarily affected. In addition irregular bedtimes and poor sleep hygiene exacerbate the problem. Some young people develop adult-type insomnia with anxiety and negative associations around sleep. Sleep tips for teenagers:

1. **Relaxing Routine:** Establish a relaxing routine (the same each night) before bedtime to get in the mood for sleep. This helps alert the body clock that you are getting ready to sleep.
2. **Bedroom:** This should be calm and dark. Not too hot or cold.
3. **Bedtimes and wake times:** Set the bedtime so that it is possible to get enough sleep. Wake up at the same time every day.
4. After a later night, a lie-in may be useful for catching up at weekends but BEWARE of lying in too long (more than 1 hour) at the weekends since this may disrupt the body clock.
5. **One hour before bed:** Screen time needs to stop an hour before bedtime. This includes computers, tablets, mobile phones and televisions. Also avoid heavy studying or exercise.
6. **More on screens:** Switch off devices including phones at night or remove from the bedroom. Sleep is affected by the light emitted from screens and also the interruptions that can occur throughout the night.
7. **Bright Light:** Encourage bright light first thing in the morning and avoid it in the evening. This helps our body produce melatonin at the right time to help sleep.
8. **Exercise and Diet:** Eat a healthy diet. Avoid things, later in the day, that are likely to keep you awake such as caffeine products (e.g. coffee, tea, chocolate, some fizzy drinks). Exercising regularly can improve sleep.
9. **Smoking and alcohol:** Don't smoke – lots of reasons for this but also, nicotine is a stimulant. Alcohol can upset sleep patterns.
10. **Napping:** Avoid "Napping". If very sleepy limit a nap to 30-40 minutes and take before 4 pm.

Ref: Mindell JA & Owens JA (2010). *A Clinical Guide to Pediatric Sleep: Diagnosis and Management of Sleep Problems, 2nd ed.* Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins

Teens, young adults and sleep (2005). American academy of sleep disorders leaflet.
http://school.sleepeducation.com/resources/lessons/teensdrowsydriving/PBrochures_TeensYngAdltsSleep.pdf [accessed 7.12.15]