



TIPS ON HELPING SECONDARY AGE CHILDREN SLEEP

Establish a bedtime

A lot of kids don't actually have a bedtime, so arranging their day with a sleep schedule in mind is key to establishing sleep habits that will last a lifetime. Encourage your teenager to go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning.

Promote a healthy lifestyle

Encourage physical activity such as walking, exercise and strength training which may help promote sleep but not within a few hours of bedtime. Avoid caffeinated drinks, such as coffee, teas, energy drinks and other sugar containing edibles for at least a few hours prior to bedtime. Remove all televisions, computers and other 'gadgets' from the bedroom including video games and mobile phones, which stimulate youngsters. Avoid arousing activities around bedtime (eg heavy study, text messaging, getting into prolonged conversations).

Make the bedroom dark at night and bright in the morning

Avoid bright light in the evening. These light cues help the body's internal clock to recognise night and day. Eyeshades might be worth a try at bedtime if the room cannot be darkened sufficiently. Bright light in the morning (open curtains or bright artificial light) helps push bedtime to an earlier hour.

An afternoon nap

A nap of an hour or less right after school can help a teen remain alert over the next 6 to 8 hours. Avoid naps later in the day, which can interfere with bedtime.

Sleep in on the weekend, but not too late

While teens need to replenish their 'sleep debt' on the weekend, children who stay up very late and 'sleep-in' past noon on the weekend have the greatest problems. It is good practice to get your teen up 2 hours or so beyond their usual wake-up time. Waking in the afternoon simply makes falling asleep at a reasonable hour on Sunday night nearly impossible and on Monday morning the cycle begins again.

Try audiobooks

Many preschoolers fall asleep to the soothing sounds of a parent reading a bedtime story. An audiobook played at a barely audible level can help the transition to sleep for teens. Unlike reading, which requires light in the room, audiobooks permit the room to be dark, and the quiet voice can function as 'white noise' that also helps prevent stray worries from hijacking a teen from sleep.

Help your teen with time-management skills

Many teens have poor judgement about how long tasks will take, and end up staying up very late to complete assignments.

Get anxiety and stress in check

Talk to your teenager about anything they are worried about. This will help them put their problems into perspective. Relaxation is beneficial for everyone, but especially for those struggling with sleep. Practicing relaxation techniques before bed is a great way to wind down, calm the mind, and prepare for sleep.

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