

Sleep Tips for Adolescents

The following recommendations will help you get the best sleep possible and make it easier for you to fall asleep and stay asleep:

- **Sleep schedule.** Wake up and go to bed at about the same time on school nights and nonschool nights. Bedtime and wake time should not differ from one day to the next by more than an hour or so.
- **Weekends.** Don't sleep in on weekends to "catch up" on sleep. This makes it more likely that you will have problems falling asleep at bedtime.
- **Naps.** If you are very sleepy during the day, nap for 30 to 45 minutes in the early afternoon. Don't nap too long or too late in the afternoon or you will have difficulty falling asleep at bedtime.
- **Sunlight.** Spend time outside every day, especially in the morning, as exposure to sunlight, or bright light, helps to keep your body's internal clock on track.
- **Exercise.** Exercise regularly. Exercising may help you fall asleep and sleep more deeply.
- **Bedroom.** Make sure your bedroom is comfortable, quiet, and dark. Make sure also that it is not too warm at night, as sleeping in a room warmer than 75°F will make it hard to sleep.
- **Bed.** Use your bed only for sleeping. Don't study, read, or listen to music on your bed.
- **Bedtime.** Make the 30 to 60 minutes before bedtime a quiet or wind-down time. Relaxing, calm, enjoyable activities, such as reading a book or listening to soothing music, help your body and mind slow down enough to let you sleep. Do not watch TV, study, exercise, or get involved in "energizing" activities in the 30 minutes before bedtime.
- **Snack.** Eat regular meals and don't go to bed hungry. A light snack before bed is a good idea; eating a full meal in the hour before bed is not.
- **Caffeine.** Avoid eating or drinking products containing caffeine in the late afternoon and evening. These include caffeinated sodas, coffee, tea, and chocolate.
- **Alcohol.** Ingestion of alcohol disrupts sleep and may cause you to awaken throughout the night.
- **Smoking.** Smoking disturbs sleep. Don't smoke for at least an hour before bedtime (and preferably, not at all).
- **Sleeping pills.** Don't use sleeping pills, melatonin, or other over-the-counter sleep aids. These may be dangerous, and your sleep problems will probably return when you stop using the medicine.

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- **Don't drive drowsy.** Teenagers are at the highest risk for falling asleep at the wheel, so don't drive when you haven't gotten enough sleep. Accidents are likely to happen in the middle of the afternoon as well at night.

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