



NEWZZZZZZ ON SLEEP FOR ADOLESCENTS!

Did you know that sleep is, in essence, food for the brain, and insufficient sleep can be harmful, even life threatening. When hungry for sleep, the brain becomes relentless in its quest to satisfy its need and will cause feelings of “sleepiness,” decreased levels of alertness or concentration, and in many cases, unanticipated sleep. Excessive sleepiness is associated with reduced short-term memory and learning ability, negative mood, inconsistent performance, poor productivity and loss of some forms of behavioral control. This is true for adults too!

So, how much sleep is your child getting regularly? Researchers are saying that the adolescent needs 8 ½ to 9 ½ hours of sleep. How does one know or measure how much sleep they need. Look for signs of sleep deprivation and sleepiness in your child:

- *difficulty waking in the morning
- *irritability late in the day
- *falling asleep spontaneously during quiet times of the day
- *sleeping for extra long periods on the weekends

The consequences of insufficient sleep among adolescents are very important to understand because they appear to be closely tied to key elements of human development. Achieving developmental goals during adolescence is essential for lifelong success and for what psychologists call social competency. The transition from childhood to adulthood is a critical time for “seeding” the values and habits that will shape their lives.

Become a sleep-smart trendsetter by understanding the dangers of insufficient sleep and avoid them. Encourage your friends to do the same. Tips for Teens:

1. Learn how much sleep you need to function at your best and strive to get it every night. You should awaken refreshed, not tired.
2. Be consistent with bedtime and wake time schedules!
3. Get into bright light as soon as possible in the morning, but avoid it in the evening. The light helps to signal to the brain when it should wake up and when it should prepare to sleep.

4. Maximize your schedule throughout the day according to your internal clock. For example, to compensate for your “slump times”, participate in stimulating activities or classes that are interactive. Try to avoid lecture classes and potentially unsafe activities.
5. Relax before going to bed. Avoid heavy reading, studying and computer games within one hour of going to bed. Don’t fall asleep with the television on— flickering light and stimulating content can inhibit restful sleep.

All information is from the Adolescent Sleep Needs and Patterns (research report and resource guide) published by the National Sleep Foundation, www.sleepfoundation.org.