

5 Ideas for Better Sleep

Most teens need about 8½ to more than 9 hours of sleep each night. But about 1 in 4 teens has trouble sleeping. Lack of sleep can affect everything from their emotions to how well they focus on tasks like driving. It can affect sports performance, increase chances of getting sick, and may be linked to weight gain in some people.

Share these tips with your teen to help them get the sleep they need:

1. **Be active during the day.** You've probably noticed how much running around little kids do — and how soundly they sleep. Take a tip from a toddler and get at least 60 minutes of exercise a day. Physical activity can decrease stress and help people feel more relaxed. Just don't work out too close to bedtime because exercise can wake you up before it slows you down.
2. **Say goodnight to electronics.** Experts recommend using the bedroom for sleep only. If you can't make your bedroom a tech-free zone, at least shut everything down an hour or more before lights out. Nothing says, "Wake up, something's going on!" like the buzz of a text or the ping of an IM.
3. **Keep a sleep routine.** Going to bed at the same time every night helps the body expect sleep. Creating a set bedtime routine can enhance this relaxation effect. So unwind every night by reading, listening to music, spending time with a pet, writing in a journal, playing Sudoku, or doing anything else that relaxes you.
4. **Expect a good night's sleep.** Stress can trigger insomnia, so the more you agonize about not sleeping, the greater the risk you'll lie awake staring at the ceiling. Instead of worrying that you won't sleep, remind yourself that you can. Say, "Tonight, I will sleep well" several times during the day. It can also help to practice breathing exercises or gentle yoga poses before bed.

Everyone has a sleepless night once in a while. But if your child regularly has trouble sleeping and you think it's affecting his or her mood or performance, talk to your doctor.