

## **Sleep**

### **Are you getting enough?**

Sleep. Not getting enough of it can affect physical and emotional well-being. Although sleepiness is an obvious consequence of inadequate sleep, those who do not get enough sleep may have difficulty processing information, learning and behaving reliably. They may also have difficulty controlling emotions, thus becoming easily frustrated and not performing to the best of their abilities.

Teenagers require adequate sleep each night on a regular basis to do their best in work and activities. Teenagers need about 9 hours of sleep per night. If they are only getting seven hours of sleep, they will accumulate a sleep deprivation of 10 hours by the weekend. Although teens may feel better on Saturday morning with an extra one or two hours of sleep, they will likely feel tired and irritable in the afternoon as they feel the effect of their accumulated sleep deprivation.

Besides increases in activities and homework, other things that get in the way of a good night's sleep for teens are television, the Internet, cell phones, e-mail, and the amount of caffeine in food and drinks.

People don't always realize the amount of caffeine in drinks like iced tea and sodas, or in different brands of the same product, like orange soda. Teens would be astonished at the amount of caffeine consumed on a daily basis. When adding up the daily intake of caffeine in the colas, chocolate and other foods eaten consistently, it isn't surprising that so many people have difficulty sleeping at night. Even low amounts of caffeine can increase tossing and turning, reduce deep sleep, increase the time it takes to fall asleep, decrease total sleep time and increase the number of times a person wakes up during the night.

## **Seven Sleep Smart Tips for Teens**

1. Sleep is food for the brain. Not getting enough can hurt performance ranging from taking school tests to participating in activities. It can also affect physical and emotional well-being.
2. Establish a regular bedtime and wake time schedule, one that can be kept consistent during weekends and vacations. Try not to stray from the schedule and avoid delaying bedtime by more than one hour. Get up the next day within two hours of the regular schedule.
3. Learn how much sleep is needed to function at the highest level. Most adolescents need between 9 hours of sleep each night. Know the time needed to get up in the morning, and then calculate bedtime to get at least 9 hours of sleep a night.
4. Get into bright light as soon as possible in the morning, but avoid it in the evening. The light helps signal the brain to wake up and when it should prepare to sleep.
5. Exercise regularly, but do so in the daytime, preferably in the afternoon.
6. After lunch (or after noon), stay away from coffee, colas with caffeine, both of which are stimulants that disrupt sleep. Nicotine and alcohol also disturb sleep.
7. 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 lights and stimulating content can inhibit restful sleep.

Getting enough sleep is an important part of living healthy. Getting regular exercise will also affect the amount and quality of sleep. During sleep, our bodies stop all but the most essential functions so that repairs, growth and recovery from exercise can be maximized. The importance of sleep cannot be overemphasized.