



Pointers for Parents

What can you do to be sure your teen gets enough sleep to be healthy and perform at his or her best?

- **Learn** about physical, behavioral and emotional changes that occur in adolescence and how sleep is affected.
- **Know** the signs of insufficient sleep in teens. They include difficulty waking in the morning, irritability late in the day, falling asleep during quiet times in the day and sleeping for extra long periods on the weekends.
- **Decide** on age-appropriate schedules for your family and work to maintain them.
- **Talk** with your teens to make sure they are getting the amount of sleep required. If not, help them to adjust or balance school, work, and activity demands to make sure that an appropriate amount of sleep can be fit into their daily schedule. Work with your teens to help make the hard choices of what activities to cut back on so that they can increase and get the amount of sleep they need.
- **Encourage** your children to keep a sleep diary for two weeks, and to share it with you. This can provide immediate insight into sleep habits that could use improvement, and can be used to measure progress.
- **Plan** ahead if your child's sleep schedule while on vacation is different from an upcoming school schedule. Move back to "school time" gradually, since this transition can take several days to several weeks to complete.
- **Seek** the opinion of a sleep expert if you think your child may have a sleep disorder. Sleepiness can be a sign of serious but treatable sleep disorders such as sleep apnea, narcolepsy, or restless legs syndrome.
- **Become** a good role model by making sleep a high priority for yourself and your family.
- **Establish** a home environment that promotes healthy sleep habits. Quiet time in the evenings should be free of loud music and bright lighting. Limit your child's use of the computer, radio, TV, phone or instant messaging close to bedtime. These devices in the bedroom can delay bed time and disrupt sleep.
- **Advocate** for positive changes in your community and schools by increasing public awareness about sleep and related disorders. Request that sleep curricula be included, and encourage your school district to enact policies that will benefit the sleep health of students.
- **Understand** that the consequences of sleep deprivation include increased chance of fall-asleep car crashes, poor health, poor grades, depression, substance abuse, aggressive conduct, and behavior problems.
- **Create** a sleep-friendly room for your teen that is cool, quiet and dark. Lights should be dim close to bedtime to signal the brain when it is time to sleep, and bright light used in the morning to signal the brain when it is time to wake up.
- **Restrict** the use of sleep-disturbing products, including caffeine. Consuming caffeine late in the day can disturb sleep many hours later.
- **Organize** active family activities. Exercise can improve sleep, but make sure it is not too close to bedtime.

