

# HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

**What is insomnia?** Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up early in the morning for more than 1 month  
\*\*\*If a child/teen is often moody or having behavior problems at school, a lack of quality sleep can be part of the issue\*\*\*

## What causes insomnia?

- Poor sleep habits by the child/teen, parents, or caregivers
- Some medications, even if over-the-counter or a natural herb
- Health conditions (ex. stress, anxiety, depression, allergies, asthma, loud snoring, ADHD, or pain)

**Do electronic devices make it harder to sleep?** Anything with a screen (TV, cell phone, video games, electronic tablets, computers) can make it harder to fall asleep, stay asleep, or have good quality sleep

## BEDTIME ROUTINES AND HABITS

- Go to bed at the same time every night, even on weekends. Children and teens need more sleep than adults who usually need about 8 hours (see table on other side).
- Follow the same routine every night to show that bedtime is soon. Have enough time so lights can go out on time (ex. take a warm bath, brush teeth, then read for 15 minutes).
- Plan ahead! Finish busywork about an hour before bedtime (ex. finish homework, lay out clothes for next day).
- Spend the hour before bedtime quietly in low light without rough-and-tumble play or using any electronics.
- Teach your child how to relax and fall asleep alone (ex. use a special blanket, picture of parent, or gentle music/sound machine. An older child may try deep breathing or picturing a pleasant, relaxing time like a day at the lake or beach).
- Put your child to bed drowsy but not asleep and leave the room. Letting them fall asleep only when you are in the room or in places other than their own bed are hard habits to break!
- Be quick, quiet, and boring if you have to check on your child in bed; set limits to your child's attention-seeking behavior.
- If your child is not asleep in about 20 minutes (older children should guess without clock-watching), have them leave bed, keep lights dim, and do a calming screen-free activity (ex. read a relaxing printed book, do a simple word puzzle).

## QUIET, COMFORTABLE SLEEP-ONLY ZONE – BEDROOMS ARE FOR SLEEPING!

- Wear comfortable pajamas. Make sure diapers are dry or your older child makes a “last trip” to the bathroom.
- Listen for noises near your child's bed making it hard to sleep (ex. noise from others in the same room or nearby).
- Keep a cool, dark room with blankets and, if needed, a night-light that does not shine directly into the eyes.
- Take distractions out of the room (ex. no TV, computer, phone, or radio; fewer toys in bed).
- Don't use the child's bed for playtime, studying, or other activities.
- Don't use the bed and sleep as punishment or timeout; also, don't use staying up past bedtime as a reward for good behavior. These things can suggest to children/teens that “sleep is bad.”
- For older children/teens, don't watch the clock in bed at night; turn it away so they can't see it.

## DAYTIME ROUTINES AND HABITS

- Get up at the same time every day, even on weekends. It's easier than enforcing a set bedtime.
- No naps during the day (usually after age 5) if napping stops sleeping at night. If they must nap, do it before 5 pm for no longer than 45 minutes. Avoid naps in places other than the bedroom (ex. the couch).
- Choose healthy foods and eat meals at the same time every day. No caffeine (ex. tea, soda, energy drinks, chocolate), especially after 5 pm. Don't eat heavy meals close to bedtime; a light snack is ok when hungry.
- Plan exercise and playtime every day, with as much bright light in the morning as possible (to help set the child's internal clock), so your child can go to bed sleepy.
- If your child is a worrier, plan a time earlier in the day to talk about worries and concerns.
- Be aware of activities that seem to cause sleeping problems so that you can stop those activities 1 – 2 hours before bedtime. Keeping a sleep diary may help to find patterns and activities that help and that don't help your child sleep.

## ELECTRONICS – TVS, CELL PHONES, GAME DEVICES, COMPUTERS, & TABLETS CAN AFFECT SLEEP!

- Set consistent time limits for daily use of electronics; the youngest age needs the least time.
- Avoid screen time at least 1 hour before bedtime to keep away from screen lights that lower sleep quality.
- Create a “Tech Free Zone” in the bedroom and remove electronics (ex. charge cell phone and computer in the kitchen at night; remove TV).
- Use an old-fashioned alarm clock instead of the cell phone to wake up.
- Be a role model and set a good example for your child or teen.

## RECOMMENDED AMOUNT OF SLEEP NEEDED EVERY DAY FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

AGES		HOURS OF SLEEP (INCLUDING NAPS) RECOMMENDED EVERY DAY
NEWBORNS & INFANTS	Newborns up to 3 months	14 – 17 hours while still establishing a sleep cycle
	4 to 12 months	12 - 16 hours
TODDLERS	1 to 3 years	11 – 14 hours
PRESCHOOLERS	3 to 5 years	10 – 13 hours
GRADE SCHOOLERS	6 to 12 years	9 – 12 hours
TEENS	13 to 18 years	8 – 10 hours

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**tip**  
SC  
Timely Information  
for Providers in  
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