

Back to School = Back to Sleep

As the long days of summer come to an end, few of us escape the air of general anticipation ushered in by the cooler weather, autumn colors, and more frequent school bus sightings.

As many of us shift from our more flexible summer routines to the frenzied beginning of the academic year, it's important to establish or re-establish family sleep routines, especially for those children and teenagers returning to school.

The American Academy of Pediatrics provides the following tips as the new school year begins:

- Getting enough sleep is critical for a child to be successful in school. Children who do not get enough sleep have difficulty concentrating and learning as well as they can.
- Set a consistent bedtime for your child and stick with it every night. Having a bedtime routine that is consistent will help your child settle down and fall asleep. Components of a calming pre-bedtime routine may involve a bath/shower, reading with them, and tucking them in and saying good-night to them.
- Have your child turn off electronic devices well before bedtime.
- Try to have the home as quiet and calm as possible when younger children are trying to fall asleep.
- Insufficient sleep is associated with lower academic achievement in middle school, high school and college, as well as higher rates of absenteeism and tardiness. The optimal amount of sleep for most younger children is 10-12 hours per night and for adolescents (13-18 year of age) is in the range of 8-10 hours per night.

Teenagers are notorious for disrupted or inconsistent sleep routines. According to Johns Hopkins sleep expert Laura Sterni, M.D., natural cognitive and physiological changes are in process that demand more sleep yet make it more difficult for teenagers to fall asleep before 11 p.m. Sleep deprivation is common in teens given this and their hectic academic, extracurricular, and personal schedules.

The following teen-specific tips are provided by Johns Hopkins Medicine:

- **Start the day in sunshine.** Having breakfast outside or by a sunny window helps regulate the body's biological clock, making it easier for teens to wake up in the morning and drift off at night.
- **Encourage the connection.** When your teen is well-rested, ask how they felt that day while taking a test or playing a sport. Help *them* come to the conclusion

that sleep improves their outlook—and help them realize how much sleep is enough.

- **Tie good sleep to car privileges.** Sleep deprivation in teens can lead to accidents. For example, tell your teenager that they can't drive to school in the morning if they are not getting enough sleep.
- **Help teens rethink their schedule.** If your teen typically starts homework after evening activities, help them find an earlier time to get started. Ultra-busy schedules may require paring down.
- **Encourage afternoon naps.** Tired teens may benefit from a 30- to 45-minute nap before dinner. This is a better fix for sleep deprivation in teens than sleeping-in, which throws off their body's sleep cycle.
- **Ban tech from the bedroom.** Using tech at night not only cuts into teens' sleep time, it also exposes them to a type of light that suppresses the body's production of the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin, making it tougher to fall asleep.

Best wishes for the start of the school year and happy sleeping!

For more helpful tips regarding back to school and sleep visit:

American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/Back-to-School-Tips.aspx>

John Hopkins Medicine

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/healthy-sleep/sleep-better/teenagers-and-sleep-how-much-sleep-is-enough>

Monthly Messages are brought to you by the Tompkins County Youth Services Department, a proud partner of The Community Coalition for Healthy Youth.

If you have further questions or comments about this message or would like information on how to become involved with the Community Coalition for Healthy Youth, please email ahendrix@tompkins-co.org



