



QUICK FACTS AND FAQ ABOUT SLEEP FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- Sleep is important for all aspects of health
- If we don't sleep well there can be problems with our physical health, our mood, our thinking and our risk increases for accidents
- Sleep patterns and needs change across the lifespan
- Check out our many other fact sheets if you still have questions

Note: All words that are underlined relate to topics in the Sleep Health Foundation Information Library at www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au

1. Why is sleep important?

Sleep is important as it plays a role in the proper functioning of ALL body systems. Although we don't really know exactly the reason why we sleep, we know that we must sleep, or we can become very ill. Sleep is important for physical and mental health, and without it, all body systems that are involved in either physical or mental health do not function well.

2. What are the effects of getting a bad night's sleep?

These can be divided into 4 main areas:

1. physiological (body systems, like cardiovascular and endocrine systems and physical health),
2. psychological (emotional and mental health),
3. psychosocial (behaviour, peer relations, family relationships), and
4. cognitive (learning, attention, problem solving; see [Memory, Thinking & Sleep](#) for more information)

3. Why do sleeping patterns change during the teenage years?

Two main reasons:

1. Social changes and pressures

Teenagers have a lot more going on in their lives (phone, TV, jobs, social activities, school, sports, homework, worry). Sleep is low on the priority list and is often given up for these other things, which can result in teenagers going to bed later.

2. Circadian (sleep/wake) rhythm factors

During adolescence there is a delay in the time when melatonin (one of our sleep hormones which makes us sleepy) is released from our brains. Therefore, adolescents are not tired until later in the evening. So, they are not ready to fall asleep until later - so they do things to stop being bored (TV, phone). Adolescents may also find it hard to get up in the morning because they fell asleep later and have not had enough sleep (see [Body Clock](#) for more information).



For other popular helps visit us online at

www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au

4. Is sleep just as important for teenagers as it is during other stages of life?

Short answer, absolutely. Research says that teenagers may actually need MORE sleep than younger and older people (see [How Much Sleep Do You Really Need?](#)). But they usually don't get it (see [Teenage Sleep](#) for more information).

5. How many hours of sleep per night should teenagers aim to get?

The current thoughts are that teenagers need about 8 to 10 hours sleep per night (see [How Much Sleep Do You Really Need?](#)). Most teenagers across the world get between 7 to 8 hours sleep, so they may be at risk of being in 'sleep debt'.

6. If people find it hard to get to sleep or to get enough sleep, what are some techniques they could try to improve this?

First of all, try and establish what is contributing to the problem. Is it:

1. **Psychological:** For instance, are they worried, stressed, anxious or depressed? This can be addressed with help from a psychological professional, school counsellor or even a good friend. Relaxation exercises are also an excellent way of learning to relax the mind and the body, so sleep is easier.
2. **Physiological (body and physical health):** For example, are they sick? If so, they will need to see a health professional.
3. **Environmental and behavioural:** Is the room too dark or light or noisy or hot. Have they drunk too much coffee or watched too much TV that can keep them awake? These environmental and behavioural issues with sleep can often be addressed by practicing good sleep hygiene. See our [Good Sleep Habits](#) fact sheet on this topic for further information.

Once you have determined what the problem is, it can be easier to choose a solution. However, if you are ever in doubt about what factors may be contributing to poor sleep, or the sleep problems are ongoing, then the best option is to see a doctor. A doctor can refer people to a [sleep specialist](#) or psychologist.

For information on over 70 different sleep related topics, written by professionals, visit the Sleep Health Foundation Information Library at www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au. The underlined topics in this article are covered in detail there.

7. Where can I find out more?

We really appreciate your interest in sleep. Did you know that we have other simple fact sheets like this one on lots of different sleep topics from A-Z! For example, you may like to check out some of the below fact sheets that are relevant to teenage sleep:

- [Teenage Sleep](#)
- [Good Sleep Habits](#)
- [Sleep Mistakes](#)
- [Technology & Sleep](#)

Visit www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/fact-sheets.html

8. Free ebook

Bruck, Dorothy (2006) *Teenage sleep: Understanding and helping the sleep of 12 - 20 year olds*. Wellness Promotion Unit, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia.

The above is a free e-book at <http://vuir.vu.edu.au/467>. It is written in a question and answer format.

This ebook is the only one published about the sleep of teenagers; written for parents, school counsellors, youth health workers, high school teachers and teenagers. It brings together a lot of things about sleep. It includes behaviours that can happen during sleep and discusses problems like night fears, wet dreams, scary dreams, sleep deprivation, snoring, needing too much sleep, not being able to get to sleep or stay asleep. Sleep walking, feelings of restless legs, being paralysed, midnight binge eating, the meaning of dreams and many other things are all covered. This e-book provides enough information to understand the key aspects of teenage sleep.



Sleep Health Foundation

114/30 Campbell Street, Blacktown NSW 2148
T: +61 (0) 2 8814 8655 F: +61 (0) 2 9672 3884



www.facebook.com/SleepHealthFoundation

This information is produced by:

Sleep Health Foundation ABN 91 138 737 854

www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au

A national organisation devoted to education, advocacy and supporting research into sleep and its disorders.

Disclaimer - Information provided here is general in nature and should not be seen as a substitute for professional medical advice. Ongoing concerns about sleep or other medical conditions should be discussed with your local doctor.

© Sleep Health Foundation, 2020
Version 1: March 2020