

Psychology in Healthcare

Sleep hacks – a guide for teenagers

Introduction

We have written this leaflet to tell you some information about the importance of sleep for teenagers and suggests some hacks to help you to get a good night's sleep.

Why is sleep a big deal?

Brain Power: Sleep helps you focus, learn, and be creative

Mental Health: Good sleep helps you to keep chill and happy. Not enough sleep can increase anxiety and mood swings.

How does puberty affect sleep?

In the teenage years most young people fall asleep later and sleep a bit longer. This is because of changes to your body clock (the time you fall asleep) that happen as a result of puberty. The amount of sleep that most teenagers need is about 9 to 10 hours.

Sleep Hacks

- ✓ **Stick to a schedule** Go to bed and wake up at around the same time every day (even during the weekends. This trains your body to know when it's time for sleep.
- ✓ **Create a chill bedtime routine.** Wind down with some activities that let your body know that it is time to fall asleep. Read a book, listen to soothing music or a relaxing podcast.
- ✓ **Make yourself a sleep cave.** Your bedroom should ideally be cool, quiet and dark. Using a sleep mask, earplugs or playing white noise can help. Find out what works best for you.
- ✓ **Exercise regularly during the day.** Exercising during the day makes you feel more awake, but it also makes you fall asleep quicker and sleep more deeply at nighttime. You should avoid any intense exercise up to 1 hour before bedtime.
- ✓ **Spend some time outside during the day.** Getting outside during the day, particularly in the morning, keeps your body clock on track and makes you feel more awake in the day and sleep better at night.
- ✓ **Manage stress** If you are feeling stressed and worried this can really interfere with sleep. Try journaling, meditation, or talking with someone you trust.

Things to avoid:

- ✗ **Don't have drinks with caffeine (tea, coffee, fizzy drinks) after about midday.** Caffeine affects your sleep. It stays in your body for 4 to 6 hours. So, it is best to avoid caffeinated drinks in the afternoons and evenings.
- ✗ **Ditch your devices for at least 30 minutes before going to sleep.** It's a good idea to keep devices outside of your bedroom at bedtime. Set your phone to "do not disturb" to avoid late night notifications.

- ✘ **Avoid daytime naps.** Taking naps can make you less sleepy at bedtime. It may mean that you stay up later or struggle to get to sleep at your usual time.
- ✘ **Don't force yourself to fall asleep.** Get into bed when you feel sleepy but if you can't sleep and feel wide awake, then get up and do something relaxing. Try getting back to bed again when you are feeling more sleepy.
- ✘ **Don't vape or smoke.** You probably already know that smoking is bad for your health. If you need help or support to stop smoking, please ask a member of your medical team. The nicotine in vaping and cigarettes is a stimulant, so it can stop you falling asleep.

Quick sleep checklist

Bedtime: aim for 9 to 10 hours of sleep

Room: Dark, quiet, cool, comfy

Routine: Relaxing, no screens, same every day

Daytime: Exercise, sunlight, no caffeine after midday

For further information

Contact details

This has been produced by the Department of Psychology in Healthcare and the Newcastle Regional Sleep Service. Clinical Psychologists are based at the RVI and Freeman Hospitals. The Regional Sleep Service is based at the Freeman Hospital. You can contact the Department of Psychology in Healthcare on 0191 282 4081 Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. If you have any further concerns about the issues discussed, please discuss these with your GP or medical team.

PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) for help, advice and information about NHS services. You can contact them on freephone 0800 032 02 02, email pals@nhct.nhs.uk. <https://www.northumbria.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/share-your-feedback/patient-and-advice-liaison-service-pals#9882d87e>

Useful websites

You might find it useful to have a look at the Teen Sleep Hub website at www.teensleephub.org.uk and the Sleep Charity website at www.thesleepcharity.org.uk.

If you would like further information about health conditions and treatment options, you may wish to have a look at the NHS website at www.nhs.uk.

If you would like to find accessibility information for our hospitals, please visit www.accessable.co.uk

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