

# Sleep hygiene for teens

## Sleep hygiene means sleeping well.

Everyone has times in their life when they don't sleep well. Most people need 7-8 hours a night but this varies from person to person.

As teenagers, you have early school start times, after school activities and a busy social life. These can keep you up late and stop you from getting a good night's sleep. If you have difficulty getting to sleep, staying asleep or you often feel tired during the day, this leaflet is for you.

## Why does sleep matter?

Sleep might be the last thing on your mind but here are a few reasons why a good night's sleep is so important:

- Lack of sleep can make you feel down and you may get angry or upset more easily.
- Sleeping well helps you cope better with the stress of life at school, with your parents and in relationships.
- Being tired slows your thinking and makes it harder to concentrate and remember things—not ideal in an exam situation!
- The right amount of sleep makes it easier to maintain a healthy weight.
- Poor sleep can make your skin worse, causing spots and pimples.
- Learning to drive is great but driving while tired is dangerous.

## What should I do to help me sleep better?

- ✓ Get into a good routine. Have a regular bedtime and waking time, even at the weekends. Sleeping in at the weekend disrupts your sleeping pattern because it has a knock on effect on what time your body is ready to sleep at night.
- ✓ Have a bedtime ritual to give your body a sign that it is time to settle and fall asleep. For example, brush your teeth and read a book for 15 minutes.
- ✓ Make your bedroom sleep friendly. It should be cool, quiet and dark. Make sure your mattress and pillow are comfortable.
- ✓ Take a warm bath before bed to help you relax and clear your mind.
- ✓ Have a light snack or warm milky drink before bed to help you sleep soundly through the night without waking up hungry.
- ✓ Try to exercise regularly. This can help you fall and stay asleep more easily.
- ✓ Go outside for some time every day. This keeps your internal body clock on track.

## What should I not do?

- ❖ Don't have a large meal or a caffeine drink (tea, coffee, fizzy drink) before bed. These will keep you awake and disturb your sleep.
- ❖ Don't look at your phone, tablet, laptop, TV or any bright screen. These activities stimulate your mind and keep you awake.
- ❖ Avoid daytime naps. Taking naps may make you stay up past your usual bedtime or mean you cannot sleep so you feel tired the next day. This can become a vicious cycle!
- ❖ Don't force yourself to fall asleep. If you can't sleep after 30 minutes, get up and do something relaxing like reading or listening to calm music. Forcing yourself to lie there trying to sleep will only frustrate you more and keep you awake longer.
- ❖ As well as being generally bad for your health, smoking also disrupts sleep.
- ❖ Do not use sleeping pills. They have dangerous side effects, are addictive and although they might help you get to sleep, they don't help you stay asleep.

## Where to get more help – useful websites and mobile phone apps



**The Sleep Council**  
Helping you get a better night's sleep



**HEADSPACE**  
TREAT YOUR HEAD RIGHT

## Contact us

If you have any questions, concerns or comments about sleep hygiene, please contact the paediatric medicine secretaries on 020 8725 3648 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4.30pm). Out of hours, please leave a voice message.

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer). **Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

