

Helping Your Teen Get a Good Nights' Sleep

1. **Consistent Sleep Schedule.** It is important that your teen go to bed and wake up at about the same time each day. This will help his/her body learn when it is time to be asleep and when it is time to be awake. It is important to keep bedtimes and wake times about the same on weekdays and weekends.
2. **Use a Consistent Bedtime Routine.** A consistent bedtime routine helps your teen prepare for sleep. Your teen's bedtime routine should last approximately 20-30 minutes and include calm, relaxing activities (i.e., getting pajamas on, brushing teeth, and reading a book together).
 - **No Television:** TV viewing, video game playing, and computer time should not be a part of your teen's bedtime routine. These activities are actually stimulating and can cause difficulties in falling asleep.
 - **No Caffeine:** Avoid caffeine (i.e., most sodas, coffee, iced tea) for at least 2 hours before bedtime.
3. **A Good Sleep Environment.** Your teen's bedroom should be comfortable, quiet, and dark. His/her bed should only be used for sleeping.
4. **Removing Cues for Activity.** To help prepare for bedtime, you want to remove anything from your teen's bedroom that would encourage them to be awake. This means not watching TV, playing games or doing homework in bed. Stuffed animals/dolls should be minimized to only 1 or 2 that help a teen get to sleep.
5. **Establish Firm Bedtime Limits.** Teens benefit from having limits or rules. It helps them to learn self-control and provides structure for them. Teens thrive on structure. It is therefore important to tell your teen what the bedtime rules are and to make sure that you are consistent at enforcing those rules. Initially teens may not like new bedtimes, but if you are consistent in adhering to the schedule, teens will learn that the rules are not to be broken and they will be more likely to follow them.
6. **Reinforce Your Teen's Positive Behaviors.** Any time that your teen follows the new sleep plan without complaint, praise them for this, and remind them that they have earned a point towards a reward. This will help to motivate your teen to follow the new schedule.
7. **Responding to Teen Complaints About Earlier Bedtime.** If your teen complains or does not stay in their bed at their bedtime, remain calm and try these suggestions:
 - **Ignore Protests.** If you ignore your teen's protests, your teen will quickly learn that he/she needs to follow your rules.
 - **Provide a Brief Reminder.** You can remind your teen of the new bedtime rules and reward if they follow the rules. However, do not get into a long discussion as this will most likely lead to a struggle to get your teen to sleep.
 - **Escort Your Teen Back to Bed.** If your teen leaves their bed, in a calm, relaxed manner, guide your teen back to their bed. During this time you can briefly remind your teen of the rules.
 - **Be Consistent.** Do not be surprised if your teen initially does not want to go to sleep at their new bedtime. If you are consistent in your expectations for being in bed at the new time, it will help your teen follow the new routine.

References: Kuhn, B.R., & Elliott, A.J. (2003). Treatment efficacy in behavioral pediatric sleep medicine. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 54, 587-597; Mindell, J.A. (1999). Empirically supported treatments in pediatric psychology: Bedtime refusal and night wakings in young children. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 24, 465-481; Mindell, J.A., & Owens, J.A. (2003). *A clinical guide to pediatric sleep: Diagnosis and management of sleep problems*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins.