

POOR SLEEP HABITS

HEALTHY SLEEP & YOUR TEEN



Table of Contents:

Introduction	3
What Does Healthy Sleep Look Like for a Teen	3
Possible Symptoms of a Lack of Healthy Sleep in Teens	3
Building a Lifestyle for Your Teen that Promotes Healthy Sleep	4
What if Your Teen Has Healthy Sleep Habits, but Still has Trouble Sleeping?	4
Two Ways SHA Can Contribute to Healthy Sleep Habits for Your Teen	5
Article Resources	5

Introduction

Do you have concerns about recent behavioral changes in your teenager? Does he or she tend to stay up late or seem tired during the day? While something serious like [alcohol abuse](#), [depression](#), or [ADHD](#) could be the cause of your teenager's change in mood or drowsy behavior, before you accuse your teen of doing drugs or put them on medication for a [behavioral disorder](#), consider their sleep habits.

The cause of this behavior may be as simple as a lack of healthy sleep. Healthy sleep is very important to the well-being of people of all ages, and it is in our best interest to develop and maintain healthy sleep habits. The more parents know about what healthy sleep actually looks like, the more they can check up on the sleep habits of their children, suggest healthy sleep adjustments, or determine if their teen's fatigue or lethargy may be coming from a more serious source.

What Does Healthy Sleep Look Like for a Teen?

Maintaining healthy sleep depends on a number of different factors. One of these factors is age. According to the National Institutes of Health's online resource [MedlinePlus](#) teenagers require nine to ten hours of sleep per day. If this seems like a shockingly high number, you may have already discovered one way to improve the sleep health of your teen. Unfortunately, if you think the answer to this problem is to simply require your teen to go to bed earlier, it might be a little more complicated than that.

[The Sleep Center at UCLA](#) advises that a shift in sleep rhythm occurs during puberty and naturally encourages the body to go to sleep one or two hours later at night. If your teen goes to bed too early it may cause him to wait restlessly before he can actually fall asleep. This may require parents to settle on a bed time late enough to facilitate a teenager's sleep rhythm, but early enough to allow him to get a healthy amount of sleep before he has to wake up for school, work, or chores.

Possible Symptoms of a Lack of Healthy Sleep in Teens

A failure to get the proper amount of sleep can result in not only physical signs like fatigue, but also in behavioral symptoms. MedlinePlus lists a few behavior-altering symptoms including:

- Anxious feelings
- [Depressed feelings](#)
- Irritable mood
- Trouble with relationships

While people often view getting adequate or inadequate sleep as a personal health choice, the fact of the matter is that missing out on healthy sleep habits can actually affect attitudes and behaviors.

Building a Lifestyle for Your Teen that Promotes Healthy Sleep

As previously mentioned, a good start to implementing healthy sleep habits is understanding the amount of sleep needed for a full and healthy life. MedlinePlus shares a list of additional actions that could lead to a more restful night of sleep. Some of these include:

- Maintaining a similar sleep routine each day
- Staying away from caffeine late in the day
- Staying free from the influence of nicotine and alcohol
- Engaging in regular exercise, preferably not too close to bedtime
- Avoiding naps late in the day
- Allowing your body to rest before bed
- Removing distractions
- Cutting down on the use of bright-screened devices, such as smartphones or televisions before bed
- Doing something relaxing, such as reading if you are having trouble falling asleep

Hopefully, taking this advice will help your teen maintain healthy sleep habits. Teenagers, especially today, are likely to be on their smartphones or watching TV to unwind before bed. If they are not getting proper sleep, limiting screened devices in the bedroom may help your teen fall asleep easier and keep her from being tempted to stay up watching television or texting her friends late into the night.

What if Your Teen Has Healthy Sleep Habits, but Still has Trouble Sleeping?

Parents must be aware that lethargy, fatigue, irritability, [anxiety](#), and depression can have more causes than a simple lack of healthy sleep. Evaluating your teen to determine if he has healthy sleep habits is a good step, but if these symptoms persist you should be aware of other possibilities. The sleep center at UCLA notes the following possible causes of fatigue or trouble sleeping:

- **Obstructive Sleep Apnea** - A breathing disruption that can cause you to wake up several times during the night
- **Narcolepsy** - A condition that may cause a person to become sleepy or fall asleep suddenly
- **Circadian Rhythm Sleep Disorders** - Trouble maintaining regular sleep routines
- **Emotional Disruptions** - Emotional distress can hinder one from maintaining healthy sleep, and can be a sign of [depression](#)

- [ADHD](#) - Certain signs of lack of sleep are similar to the signs of ADHD
- **Medical Conditions** - Conditions like asthma or epilepsy can cause sleep disruption, and taking certain medications can cause trouble sleeping as well

If you feel your teen already has healthy sleep habits and their fatigue or moodiness continues, seek advice about these other possible causes and explore appropriate options for treatment.

Two Ways Shepherds Hill Academy Can Contribute to Healthy Sleep Habits for Your Teen

While unhealthy sleep is not a likely reason for a parent to enroll their teen at Shepherds Hill Academy, it is important to note that the need for sleep may be contributing to a teen's moodiness, anxiety, or feelings of depression. There are two broad ways in which Shepherds Hill Academy can contribute to the sleep health of your teen.

- Because we highly value structure at Shepherds Hill Academy, students go to bed at the same time each night and rise at the same time in the morning. This structure can help insure regular sleep routines for our students.
- Shepherds Hill is a [wilderness program](#). For us, this means that we remove distractions from the lives of our students. As a result, while computers and televisions are used in certain buildings, during certain hours, for certain approved activities, when the students leave the main campus to return to their living quarters at night, they are not allowed to access technology. This removes the distraction and unhealthy temptation of students to disrupt their sleep rhythm with the light of a computer or phone screen.

Through these practices, we attempt to remove the causes of poor sleep habits and replace them with structure.

Article Resources:

- Healthy Sleep, (n.d.). MedLinePlus, Retrieved from: <https://medlineplus.gov/healthysleep.html> Sleep and Teens, (n.d.). UCLA Health, Retrieved from: <http://sleepcenter.ucla.edu/sleep-and-teens>