Teenagers and sleep
Sleep research suggests that a teenager needs between eight and 10 hours of sleep every night. Most teenagers only get about 6.5 – 7.5 hours sleep per night, and some get less.

Regularly not getting enough sleep leads to chronic sleep deprivation. This can have dramatic effects on a teenager’s life, impacting their mental wellbeing, increasing their risk of depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. It can also affect academic performance at school.

**Causes of teenage sleep deprivation**

Some of the reasons why many teenagers regularly do not get enough sleep include:

- **hormonal time shift** – puberty hormones shift the teenager’s body clock forward by about one or two hours, making them sleepier one to two hours later. Yet, while the teenager falls asleep later, early school starts don’t allow them to sleep in. This nightly ‘sleep debt’ leads to chronic sleep deprivation
- **using screen based devices** – smart phones and other devices used around bed time reduce sleep time. Teens who put down their smart-phones an hour before bed gain an extra 21 minutes sleep a night, (that’s one hour and 45 minutes over the school week) according to a study by Vic Health and the Sleep Health Foundation
- **hectic after-school schedule** – homework, sport, part-time work and social commitments can cut into a teenager’s sleeping time
- **leisure activities** – the lure of stimulating entertainment such as television, the internet and computer gaming can keep a teenager out of bed.
- **light exposure** – light cues the brain to stay awake. In the evening, lights from televisions, mobile phones and computers can prevent adequate production of melatonin, the brain chemical (neurotransmitter) responsible for sleep
- **vicious circle** – insufficient sleep causes a teenager’s brain to become more active. An over-aroused brain is less able to fall asleep.
- **social attitudes** – in Western culture, keeping active is valued more than sleep
- **sleep disorder** – sleep disorders, such as restless legs syndrome or sleep apnoea, can affect how much sleep a teenager gets.

**Effects of teenage sleep deprivation**

The developing brain of a teenager needs between eight and 10 hours of sleep every night. The effects of chronic (ongoing) sleep deprivation may include:

- concentration difficulties
- mentally ‘drifting off’ in class
- shortened attention span
- memory impairment
- poor decision making
- lack of enthusiasm
- moodiness and aggression
- depression
- risk-taking behaviour
- slower physical reflexes
- clumsiness, which may result in physical injuries
- reduced sporting performance
- reduced academic performance
- increased number of ‘sick days’ from school because of tiredness
- truancy.

**Preventing sleep deprivation in teenagers – tips for parents**

Try not to argue with your teenager about bedtime. Instead, discuss the issue with them. Together, brainstorm ways to increase their nightly quota of sleep. Suggestions include:

- Allow your child to sleep in on the weekends.
- Encourage an early night every Sunday. A late night on Sunday followed by an early Monday morning will make your child drowsy for the start of the school week.
- Decide together on appropriate time limits for any stimulating activity such as homework or screen time. Encourage restful activities during the evening.
such as reading.

- Avoid early morning appointments, classes or training sessions for your child if possible.
- Help your teenager to better schedule their after-school commitments to free up time for rest and sleep.
- Assess your teenager's weekly schedule together and see if they are overcommitted. Help them to trim activities if they are.
- Encourage your teen to take an afternoon nap after school to help recharge their battery, if they have time.
- Work together to adjust your teenager’s body clock. You may like to consult with your doctor first.

**Top sleep tips for teenagers**

The typical teenage brain wants to go to bed late and sleep late the following morning, which is usually hard to manage. You may be able to adjust your body clock but it takes time. Suggestions include:

- Choose a relaxing bedtime routine; for example, have a bath and a hot milky drink before bed, or use meditation or mindfulness activities. Gentle yoga may also help.
- Avoid screens such as computers, TV or smart phones, loud music, homework or any other activity that gets your mind racing for at least an hour before bedtime.
- Avoid stimulants in the evening like coffee, tea, soft drinks and energy drinks.
- Keep your bedroom dark at night. Your brain’s sleep–wake cycle is largely set by light received through the eyes. Try to avoid watching television or using smart phones right before bed. In the morning, expose your eyes to lots of light to help wake up your brain.
- Do the same bedtime routine every night for at least four weeks to make your brain associate this routine with going to sleep.
- Start your bedtime routine a little earlier than usual (for example, 10 minutes) after four weeks. Do this for one week.
- Add an extra 10 minutes every week until you have reached your desired bedtime.
- Get active during the day so you are more physically tired at night.
- Set up a comfortable sleep environment.
- Set up a regular wake-up time.
- Avoid staying up late on the weekends. Late nights will undo your hard work.
- Remember that even 30 minutes of extra sleep each night on a regular basis makes a big difference. However, it may take about six weeks of getting extra sleep before you feel the benefits.

**Teenage sleep deprivation – other issues to consider**

If lack of sleep is still a problem despite your best efforts, suggestions include:

- Assess your sleep hygiene. For example, factors that may be interfering with your quality of sleep include a noisy bedroom, a lumpy mattress or the habit of lying awake and worrying.
- Consider learning a relaxation technique to help you wind down in readiness for sleep.
- Avoid having any food or drink that contains caffeine after dinner. This includes coffee, tea, cola drinks and chocolate.
- Avoid recreational drugs (including alcohol, tobacco and cannabis) as they can cause you to have broken and poor quality sleep.
- See your GP if self-help techniques don’t increase your nightly sleep quota.

**Where to get help**

- Your GP
- Sleep disorder clinic

**References**

- Sleep and mental wellbeing, 2018, VicHealth, Victorian Government.
- Teenage sleep, 2011, Sleep Health Foundation, NSW.
Questions

Please note that we cannot answer personal medical queries. If you are looking for health or medical advice we recommend that you:

- talk to your doctor or pharmacist
- dial triple zero (000) in an emergency
- ring NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24.

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More information

Young people (13-19)

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

- Young people basics
- Growth and development
- Communication and behaviour
- Healthy eating
- Keeping active
- Managing weight
- Smoking, alcohol and drugs
- Identity and relationships
- Sex and sexuality
- School and study
- Health and wellbeing
- Health conditions and complaints
- Grief and trauma
Young people basics

- Teenage health
  Young people have to work through a broad range of issues as they move from childhood to adulthood...

- Alcohol - how much is too much? (video)
  Youth Central journalist Soren Frederiksen asks young people what they think is the limit for safe drinking and comes up with some interesting results...

- Assessing your alcohol and drug use
  If you are worried about your alcohol or drug use or, call DirectLine on 1800 888 236 for counselling, information and referral, or speak with your local doctor...

- Depression in young people
  Young people can feel sad and worried about life events but with depression, the feelings of sadness go on for weeks or months and affect everyday life...

- FReeZA
  FReeZA supports young Victorians to get involved in community life through planning and staging drug, alcohol and smoke-free music and cultural events for other young people in their local community...

- Growth and weight changes in teenagers
  The end of a growth spurt may trigger a drop in appetite, so don't immediately assume that your child is trying to lose weight...

- Helping your child with mental illness
  Recognising that your child has a mental health problem and seeking professional support are important first steps to take...

- Immunisation – deciding which vaccines you need
  Everyone's immunisation needs are different and are influenced by your health, lifestyle, age and occupation...

- Partying safely
  It is important to create a safe environment at parties so that everyone can have fun. Staying safe means avoiding injury or assault, not hurting anyone else, and not ruining an event or...

- Puberty
  Adjusting to the many changes that happen around puberty can be difficult for both parents and young people...

- Teenagers and communication
  Accept that your adolescent may have a different view of the world and respect their opinions...

- Young carers
  Even though you are caring for someone else, it is important that you remember to take care of yourself...

- Young people and health services
  There are many subsidised and free medical, dental, mental, community health services available to support young people in Victoria...

Growth and development

- Growing pains
  Growing pains may cause a lot of pain but they are harmless and can respond to simple treatments...

- Growth and weight changes in teenagers
  The end of a growth spurt may trigger a drop in appetite, so don't immediately assume that your child is trying to lose weight...

- Growth charts for children
  Babies and young children do not usually grow in a perfectly smooth way, but instead grow in 'bursts'...

- Puberty
  Adjusting to the many changes that happen around puberty can be difficult for both parents and young people...

Communication and behaviour

- Teenagers and communication
  Accept that your adolescent may have a different view of the world and respect their opinions...

- Assertiveness
It is helpful to imagine assertiveness as the middle ground between aggression and passivity…

- Bullying
  Parents can help with bullying by supporting their child and involving the authorities to find solutions…

- Cyberbullying (online bullying)
  Cyberbullying (or online bullying) happens when technology is used to bully someone…

- Internet addiction
  Internet addiction refers to the compulsive need to spend a lot of time on the Internet, to the point where relationships, work and health suffer…

- Internet safety for children
  A child's digital footprint can be as easy to follow as their real footprints…

- Mobile phone safety for children
  Teach your child strategies for responding to mobile phone bullying…

- Peer pressure
  Peer groups can be a very positive influence on your teenager's life…

- Receptive language disorder
  Receptive language disorder means the child has difficulties with understanding what is said to them…

- Tertiary studies - settling in
  Starting tertiary studies can be challenging and stressful, but your institution can provide counselling and other support services…

Healthy eating

- Teenagers and healthy eating
  A teenager who consumes healthy meals and snacks will maintain their weight and meet their requirements for essential nutrients like calcium and iron…

- Tertiary students and healthy eating
  It's not difficult or expensive to plan, shop and cook your own meals, even if you're on a tight budget…

- Body image and diets
  Some people diet because they have a poor body image, not because they want to be a healthy weight…

- Breakfast
  Children who skip breakfast may lack sufficient vitamins and minerals including iron, calcium, zinc and vitamin B2…

- Children's diet - fruit and vegetables
  If you eat and enjoy fruit and vegetables every day, your child may eventually follow your lead…

- Eating disorders and adolescents
  Often, an eating disorder develops as a way for an adolescent to feel in control about what's happening in their life…

- Healthy eating – school lunches
  Simple ways to make your child's school lunch healthier…

- Healthy eating tips
  A good balance between exercise and food intake is important to maintain a healthy body weight…

- Lunch - avoid the fast food fix (video)
  Nutritionist Shane Bilsborough shows us how much energy it takes to burn off a fast food lunch. Join tradies, Corky and Danny as they find out how to maintain a healthy weight…

- Lunch boxes - healthy ideas
  Healthy foods that are great for school lunch boxes…

- Lunch boxes - menu planner
  By planning ahead, you can make sure that your child's lunch box has each of the six key elements of a healthy lunchbox…

- Lunch box tips
Encourage children to help choose and prepare their own healthy snack or lunch...

- **Tips to keep our snacks on track (slide show)**
  Most of us are prone to the odd snack or two. Check out these simple tips to keep your snacks on track...

- **Vegetarian diets and children**
  Children can eat a vegetarian diet and stay healthy as long as their extra nutritional needs are met...

**Keeping active**

- **Getting active - tucker talk tips**
  The main thing is to choose physical activities that you enjoy and that you can stick to in the long term...

- **Parent's guide for active girls**
  Physical activity is an important part of health and wellbeing, and girls should remain active as they grow up...

- **Physical activity - overcoming barriers (video)**
  Former world aerobics champion, Sue Stanley shows us how to overcome common exercise excuses...

- **Sport and children**
  Make sure that some family outings offer opportunities for physical activity, such as playing sport together...

- **Sports injuries**
  A sports injury may be more severe than you think...

**Managing weight**

- **Body image and diets**
  Some people diet because they have a poor body image, not because they want to be a healthy weight...

- **Body mass index (BMI)**
  Body mass index or BMI is an approximate measure of your total body fat...

- **Growth charts for children**
  Babies and young children do not usually grow in a perfectly smooth way, but instead grow in "bursts"...

- **Obesity in children - causes**
  Once children are overweight, it takes a lot of effort for them to return to a healthy weight...

- **Obesity in children - management**
  If your child is overweight, you can help by making healthier lifestyle choices for yourself...

- **Weight loss and fad diets**
  With a balanced eating plan, it's what you leave in that makes all the difference...

**Smoking, alcohol and drugs**

- **Alcohol and teenagers**
  Alcohol is responsible for most drug-related deaths in the teenage population...

- **Alcohol consumption - when things don't go to plan (video)**
  Don't give up if your plan doesn't work the first time...

- **Alcohol - tips to turning down drinks (video)**
  Saying no can be hard. There are things you can do to make it easier...

- **Drugs and teenagers**
  Teenagers use drugs for similar reasons that adults do...

- **Partying safely - schoolies week**
  Partying at schoolies week can be fun, but you need to be aware of the risks, which can include accidents, robbery, violence and sexual assault...

- **Partying safely – tips for teenagers**
Don't advertise a party via SMS or the internet to limit the risk of gate-crashers and violent situations.

- **Smoking - how to discourage your children**
  Children are less likely to smoke if their parents do not smoke.

- **Smoking - the financial cost**
  If you want to quit smoking, think about how much of your weekly income is going up in smoke.

- **Talking to kids about drugs**
  All children are eventually exposed to drugs – prescription medication, alcohol and tobacco, and sometimes illegal drugs too – or to messages about drugs.

**Identity and relationships**

- **Assertiveness**
  It is helpful to imagine assertiveness as the middle ground between aggression and passivity.

- **Body image and diets**
  Some people diet because they have a poor body image, not because they want to be a healthy weight.

- **Body image and young people - staying positive (video)**
  The pressure on young girls and boys to be physically perfect is creating an epidemic of children and teenagers with low self-esteem and negative body image. Reporter Flips Sheldon introduces us to the.

- **Body image - men**
  Homosexual men and athletes are particularly vulnerable to poor body image or feeling insecure about their bodies.

- **Body image – tips for parents**
  Give your child opportunities to appreciate their body for what it can do, rather than what it looks like.

- **Body image - women**
  The urge to diet or use other dangerous weight loss methods is almost always prompted by feeling unhappy with body shape or size.

- **Bullying**
  Parents can help with bullying by supporting their child and involving the authorities to find solutions.

- **Cyberbullying (online bullying)**
  Cyberbullying (or online bullying) happens when technology is used to bully someone.

- **Depression in young people**
  Young people can feel sad and worried about life events but with depression, the feelings of sadness go on for weeks or months and affect everyday life.

- **Family conflict**
  It is normal to disagree with each other from time to time and occasional conflict is part of family life.

- **Family violence and children**
  Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to experience emotional and behavioural problems.

- **Helping your child with mental illness**
  Recognising that your child has a mental health problem and seeking professional support are important first steps to take.

- **Internet safety for children**
  A child's digital footprint can be as easy to follow as their real footprints.

- **Is my body normal? (Boys)**
  Boys' bodies come in all shapes and sizes. As you get older, and go through puberty, you become more aware of your body and how it compares with others. Boys' bodies come in all shapes and sizes.

- **Is my body normal? (Girls)**
  Puberty is a time when your body goes through lots of changes. It's wonderful and exciting, and can sometimes feel overwhelming. This is the time your body changes from being a girl into being a woman.

- **Making friends**
Friendships are an important part of life, but many of us find it difficult to find, make or keep friends.

- Mobile phone safety for children
  Teach your child strategies for responding to mobile phone bullying.

- Moving out of home - tips for young people
  If you are leaving home, try to go on a positive note. Hopefully, your parents are happy about your plans and support your decision.

- Partying safely and sex
  Partying is fun but being out of it on alcohol or drugs can put you at risk of unwanted or unsafe sex.

- Peer pressure
  Peer groups can be a very positive influence on your teenager's life.

- Piercings
  If you want to have your body pierced, choose an experienced, registered practitioner to reduce the risks of infection and scarring.

- Sex – are you ready
  It is normal to have mixed feelings about having sex with someone else.

- Strong relationships, strong health
  Throughout your life, the number and strength of your relationships affect your mental and physical wellbeing. The benefits of social connections and good mental health are numerous. Proven links.

- Tattoos
  If you want to get a tattoo, choose an experienced, registered practitioner to reduce the risks of infection and scarring.

### Sex and sexuality

- Sex – are you ready
  It is normal to have mixed feelings about having sex with someone else.

- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
  It is not difficult to avoid catching sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

- Bisexuality
  Bisexuality is when a person finds men and women physically, sexually or emotionally attractive.

- Gay male sexuality
  There is no real explanation as to why some men are gay and others are not; it is just part of the wide variety of human sexuality.

- Lesbian sexuality
  Many women report they have lesbian experiences or feelings, but do not think of themselves as lesbians.

- Men and sexuality
  Sexuality is not about whom we have sex with, or how often we have it. Sexuality is about our sexual feelings, thoughts, attractions and behaviours towards other people. We can find other people.

- Menstrual cycle
  The menstrual cycle is complex and is controlled by many different glands and the hormones that these glands produce.

- Oral sex
  Oral sex is using your mouth, lips or tongue to stimulate your partner’s genitals or anus. Both men and women can give and receive oral sex.

- Partying safely and sex
  Partying is fun but being out of it on alcohol or drugs can put you at risk of unwanted or unsafe sex.

- Sex education - tips for parents
  Mothers are more likely to talk about intimate, emotional and psychological aspects of sex than fathers.

- Sexuality explained
  Sexuality is not about whom we have sex with, or how often we have it. Sexuality is about our sexual feelings, thoughts, attractions and behaviours towards other people. We can find other people.

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
Time to immunise - free vaccines for men who have sex with men

Immunisation is one of the best ways you can protect yourself and others from infectious diseases in our community. In partnership with Thorne Harbour Health (formerly Victorian AIDS Council), the...

Trans and gender diverse people

Your gender is what feels natural to you, even if it is different from your biological sex. Some people may not feel comfortable with their biological sex but choose to live with the gender with which...

Women and sexuality

Most girls start puberty around 10 years old, but it can be earlier or later than that. Your body will go through big changes as you change from a girl into a young woman. For some girls (and women...)

School and study

10 tips to prepare your child for high school

Visit the school before the school year starts ... 10 tips to prepare your child for high school...

Chronic illness - coming at school

Supporting a student with a chronic illness requires a 'whole school' approach...

Cyberbullying (online bullying)

Cyberbullying (or online bullying) happens when technology is used to bully someone...

Tertiary students and healthy eating

It's not difficult or expensive to plan, shop and cook your own meals, even if you're on a tight budget...

Tertiary studies - managing stress

Stress is a common issue for all tertiary students, but there are lots of ways to manage your stress...

Tertiary studies - settling in

Starting tertiary studies can be challenging and stressful, but your institution can provide counselling and other support services...

Year 12 exams - managing stress

Help your child manage stress during exams by getting them to use good study habits, eat well, exercise, relax, sleep and keep things in perspective...

Health and wellbeing

Depression in young people

Young people can feel sad and worried about life events but with depression, the feelings of sadness go on for weeks or months and affect everyday life...

Eating disorders and adolescents

Often, an eating disorder develops as a way for an adolescent to feel in control about what's happening in their life...

Family violence and children

Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to experience emotional and behavioural problems...

Helping your child with mental illness

Recognising that your child has a mental health problem and seeking professional support are important first steps to take...

Immunisation – deciding which vaccines you need

Everyone's immunisation needs are different and are influence by your health, lifestyle, age and occupation...

Immunisation in secondary schools

Some immunisations are recommended for all Australian teenagers...

Partying safely - schoolies week

Partying at schoolies week can be fun, but you need to be aware of the risks, which can include accidents, robbery, violence and sexual assault...

Partying safely – tips for teenagers

Don't advertise a party via SMS or the internet to limit the risk of gate-crashers and violent situations...

Recognising when a child is at risk

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
Too many children are physically, sexually and emotionally abused and when this happens, it is up to adults to speak up.

Health conditions and complaints

- **Acne**
  Acne is common and can make people of all ages feel embarrassed, but treatments can help if acne is causing distress.

- **Asthma and teenagers**
  Asthma affects about one in ten teenagers in Australia.

- **Diabetes - issues for children and teenagers**
  Many parents worry when their child with diabetes starts or returns to school.

- **Eating disorders**
  Eating disorders are a mental illness and can affect women and men of all age groups.

- **Glandular fever**
  Glandular fever is most common among high school and university students, but young children can also become infected by saliva on toys, shared cups, or the hands of carers.

- **Obesity in children - causes**
  Once children are overweight, it takes a lot of effort for them to return to a healthy weight.

- **Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)**
  It is not difficult to avoid catching sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Grief and trauma

- **Cyberbullying (online bullying)**
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- **Helping your child with mental illness**
  Recognising that your child has a mental health problem and seeking professional support are important first steps to take.

- **Trauma and teenagers - common reactions**
  A teenager may be deeply upset by a traumatic event, but not share their feelings with their parents.

- **Trauma and teenagers - tips for parents**
  Teenagers may turn to friends rather than parents for support in times of trauma and distress.

- **Youth suicide - the warning signs**
  All suicide threats are serious. You don't have to be a trained professional to help a person contemplating suicide.

Related Information

- **Sleep hygiene**
  You can retrain your body and mind so that you sleep well and wake feeling rested.

- **Growth and weight changes in teenagers**
  The end of a growth spurt may trigger a drop in appetite, so don't immediately assume that your child is trying to lose weight.

- **Sleep explained**
  Fatigue is thought to cause about one in six road accidents - make sure you get enough sleep.

- **Snoring**
  Snoring isn't harmful but may lead to long-term sleep deprivation.
Sleep disorders can prevent some people from getting enough sleep...

Related information on other websites

- Child and Youth Health South Australia
- National Sleep Foundation USA

Content Partner

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by: Better Health Channel

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Health topics

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- Healthy living
- Services and support

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