



SLEEP POINTS

1. Stick to a consistent wake-up and bedtime every day of the week

While many believe sleeping in on the weekends is a luxury that should not be missed, this habit creates body-clock disruptions that can turn into chronic sleep problems.

Someone who wakes up at 5:00 am on most days, but sleeps until 9:00 am on weekends is readjusting their body's internal clock for 2 days every week.

The delayed wakeup time leads to later daylight exposure and an alteration in one's sleep drive, which will ultimately push back the next sleep period. Come Sunday night, sleep initiation at the proper time is difficult to achieve, and when the alarm clock sounds early Monday morning, the body is determined to sleep another hour or two. As a result, you fall 'out of synch,' and fatigue-related moods, lack of alertness, and performance problems arrive.

2. Establish a bedtime routine

Engaging in a pre-bedtime routine is beneficial for several reasons. Remember, humans are creatures of habit, and once well-learned sequences of behaviors are established, one action usually automatically stimulates the next. Because of this, it is important to adhere to a consistent nightly routine whenever possible.

An example would be to turn off the TV at 9:00 pm, take a hot shower, lay out workout clothes for the next day, read a relaxing book for 30 minutes, set the alarm clock, and go to bed by 10:30 pm. This sequence will prepare the body and brain to fall asleep at the desired time each night. Keep in mind that habits are relatively easy to establish, but difficult to break. Thus, if your bedtime practices have involved behaviors not conducive to sleep, it will take some time to break these connections and reestablish a positive routine.

3. Create a quiet and comfortable sleep environment

A quiet, cool, dark, and comfortable sleep environment is crucial for the best possible sleep. Although complete environmental control is difficult to accomplish, especially when traveling, everything that can be controlled should be controlled. Make sure the room is dark with a comfortable temperature (around 67 degrees F is best). It's better to have the room slightly cooler than normal with enough bed covers to stay warm.

Unwanted noise can be masked with a fan or other noise-cancelling device. Aim to keep surrounding sound levels steady, low, and consistent. Earplugs are also helpful for attenuating outside noises, although it may take up to a week to get used to sleeping with these. Finally, make sure the mattress and pillow are firm and supportive. If not, replace them.



4. Don't consume caffeine within 4 hours of bedtime

Caffeine is no-doubt the primary energy booster among athletes because it works and most of the time there are no prohibitions against its use. However, we know that caffeine exerts a negative effect on sleep quality if taken too close to bedtime. While the advice is to avoid any caffeine within 4 hours of bedtime, a recent scientific paper indicated that even morning caffeine consumption can negatively impact nighttime sleep.

Be sure to consider the possibility that you may be consuming caffeine in unassuming products. For instance, certain brands of orange soda, varieties of tea, chocolate, and many over-the-counter pain-relieving medications contain caffeine. In order to avoid stimulant-induced sleep problems, take the time to understand caffeine's effects and carefully review all food, drink, and medicine labels that could potentially contain this compound. This includes energy drinks as well.

5. Rejuvenate with a midday snooze.

Naps are okay if your teen wants or likes to take them. However, naps should be limited to no more than 20-30 minutes and should be taken in the early afternoon only. Napping too long or too late in the afternoon makes it difficult to fall asleep at bedtime.

6. Don't go to bed hungry.

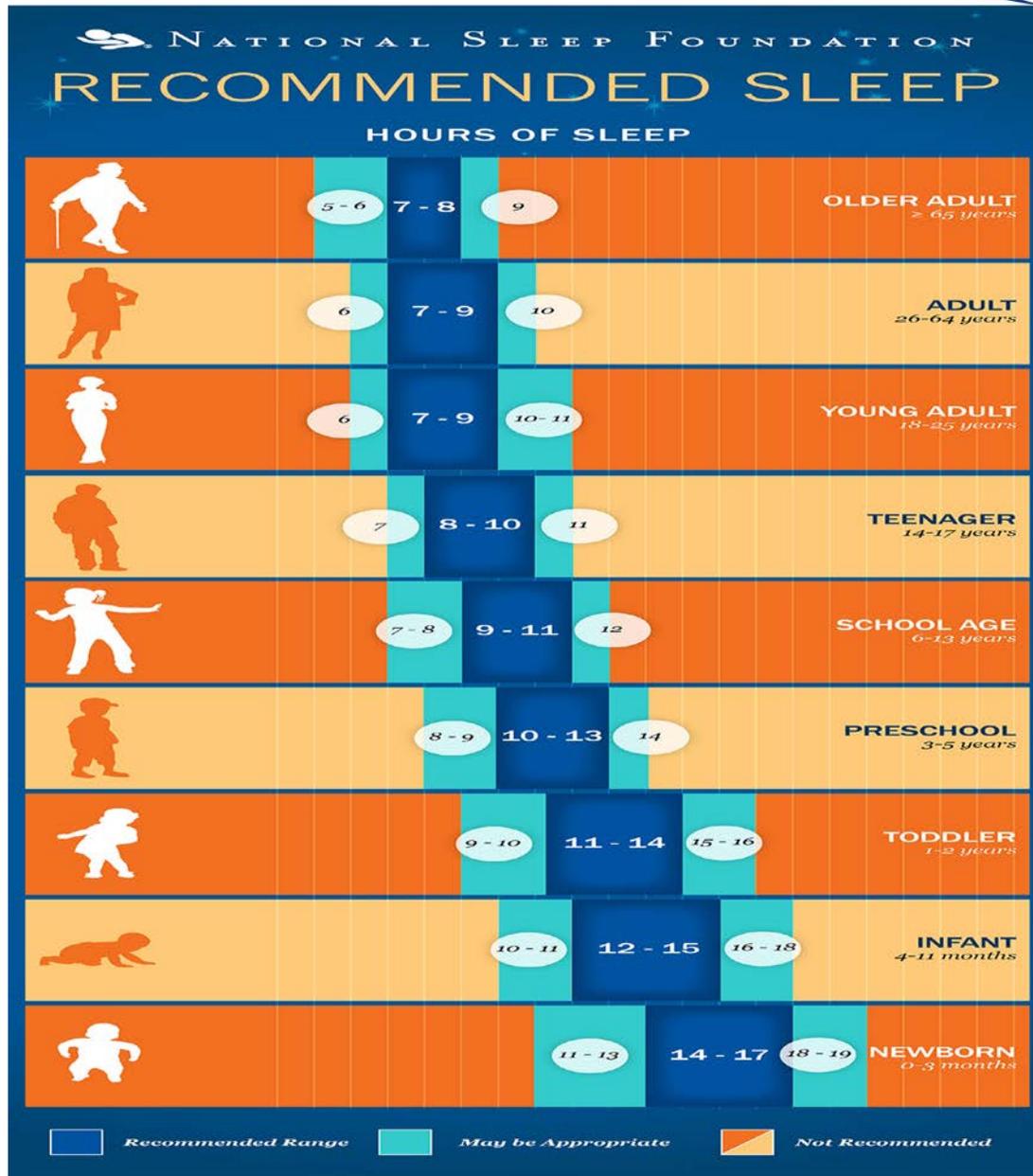
Make sure your teen doesn't go to bed hungry. Provide a light snack such as a glass of milk, a piece of fruit, cereal and milk or crackers. Avoid feeding a heavy meal within 1 to 2 hours of bedtime, as this can interfere with sleep. Helping your teen maintain a proper diet will aid in his or her overall health. Have your teen eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grain cereals and breads, rice, pasta, fish and poultry. Breakfast should not be skipped. Avoid fried foods and limit the intake of fats.

7. Get regular exercise.

Exercise, 30 to 60 minutes, at least four times a week, will lead to better fitness and better sleep. The only caution about exercise is to not do it within 2-3 hours of bedtime as this is a time when the body needs to be winding down for sleep.

8. Don't smoke and avoid alcohol.

Nicotine is also a stimulant and can disturb sleep. Every effort should be made not to smoke at all – for overall health reasons – but if your teen does smoke, he or she should not smoke within an hour or so of bedtime. Use of alcohol, sleeping pills, or other over-the-counter sleep aids all may disrupt sleep. See your doctor if your teen is using these products to help with sleep.



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