

## The Importance for Sleep for Teenagers

### Why is sleep important?

Sleep is essential for good emotional and physical wellbeing. The average teenager requires 8-10 hours of sleep every night. We need sleep to support our development, growth, boost our immune system and help us to concentrate throughout the day. Sleep deprivation can impact on our attention, learning and memory and make everyday activities more difficult. Lack of sleep can make us hyperactive, hypersensitive and hyper vigilant (“on edge”).

### How can anxiety impact on my sleep?

Anxious thoughts can wear young people down and affect their sleep patterns. Many young people avoid that quiet time at night as it gives them more time to think about their thoughts and worries. You may find it hard to switch off because you are thinking about what went wrong in your day or worrying about what might happen tomorrow. Anxiety can cause people to become so overwhelmed that they need to shut down and revert to sleep to physically recover the emotional fatigue that has been building up. This may involve napping during the day and being awake at night. You may prefer to be awake at night when everyone else is asleep to avoid any demands being placed on you but as a result you can very quickly turn night into day. This can limit the activities you engage in during the day and reduce time spent with family and friends which can be detrimental to your social and emotional wellbeing. This can be very difficult to reverse.

### How can you reduce your anxiety before bed time?

- Try and share your worries throughout the day with a friend, teacher or parent.
- Use a worry technique such as a worry box or worry journal to write your thoughts throughout the day so they do not build up by night time.
- Incorporate deep pressure and calming strategies into your daily routine.
- Try relaxation techniques such as muscle relaxation or meditation before bed.
- Use distraction techniques such as grounding activities to distract you from your worries.
- Limit your social media if this is increasing your anxiety levels.

### Why do I feel more alert at night?

Teens tend to feel more alert in the evening and more tired in the morning as a result of changes in their biological clocks. In the modern world everything is 24/7 and there are lots of distractions to stop us from sleeping such as gaming, social media and watching television. We need to try and establish a good routine in the lead up going to bed to help us adjust our body clocks.

## Why is it so important to turn off screen time before bed?

The last hour before you go to sleep is the most important time to prepare for sleep as your body should be getting naturally ready for sleep with the natural release of melatonin. The lights that come from screen time such as phones, video games or TV can interfere with the production of melatonin and stop you falling asleep. If you give your body signals that you are still busy it will not start the process of getting your body ready for sleep. You should therefore switch off all screen time at least an hour before bed.

## What else can you do to help establish a good bedtime routine?

- Go to bed at a reasonable time and stick to a bedtime routine.
- Have a warm relaxing bath before bed and swaddle with heavy towel.
- Try mindfulness and relaxation exercises before you go to bed at night.
- Read a book or listen to relaxing music.
- Avoid caffeine drinks or sugary snacks.
- Try some deep pressure or calming activities.
- Make sure you exercise during the day to tire yourself out but not too close to bedtime.
- Avoid napping during the day as this can shift your body clock.
- Try zoning areas of the bedroom for homework, gaming and sleep.
- Try keeping a sleep diary.

