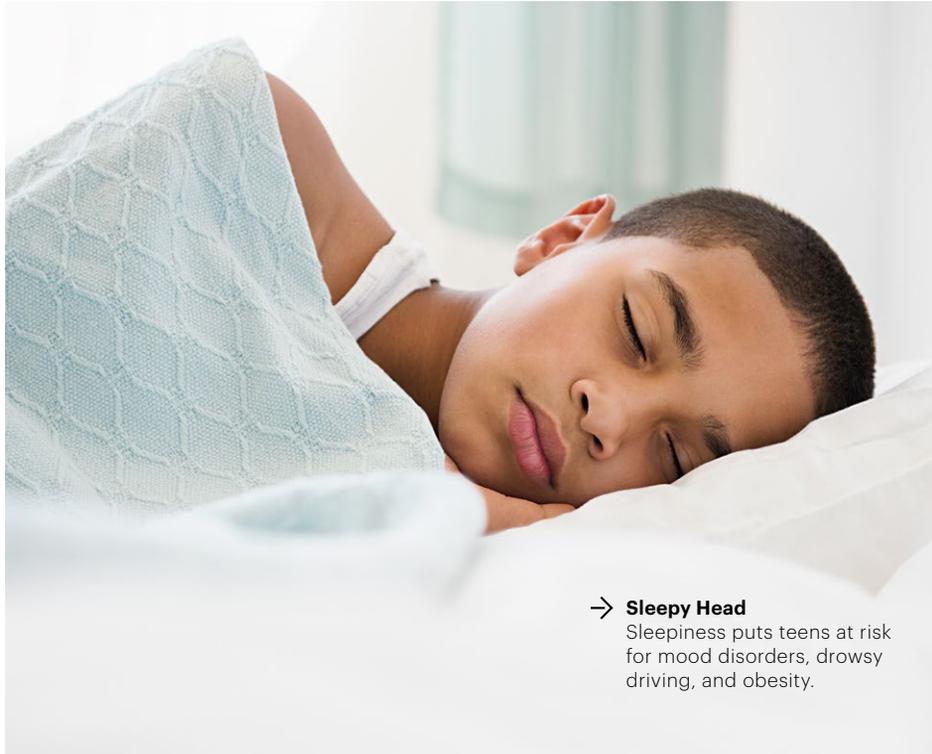


→ Search for the article [How to Get Teens to Get Enough Sleep](#) at [WebMD.com](#).

TEEN HEALTH

Late Shift

Staying up late comes naturally to teens. But waking up early for school can lead to chronic sleepiness—and possibly a host of other problems.



→ **Sleepy Head**
Sleepiness puts teens at risk for mood disorders, drowsy driving, and obesity.

About one in five of the teens said they got less than seven hours of sleep a night—well short of the 8½ to 9½ hours pediatricians say they need. But lack of sleep alone didn't affect their behavior.

Problems arise when teens stay up late, then get up early for school or activities, going against the body's natural cycle of sleepiness and alertness known as the circadian rhythm, says Sujay Kansagra, MD, a pediatric neurologist and sleep specialist at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina. "It's a mismatch between society's demands and what your body wants to do at that time," he says.

Sleepiness puts teens at greater risk of mood disorders, drowsy driving, and obesity, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, which calls for later start times in middle and high schools. Only about one in six public middle and high schools starts at 8:30 a.m. or later.

Teen devotion to electronic devices plays a role, too. Buzzing text messages keep teens awake, while the blue glow of smartphones and tablets suppresses melatonin, the hormone that makes people sleepy. "These devices are perfect sleep killers," says Kansagra.

While you may not be able to convince your school system to change the school start time, you can ask your teen to shut off the phone at least 30 minutes before bedtime and make sleep a priority.

"[Electronic] devices are perfect sleep killers."

MOST TEENAGERS ARE HARD-WIRED TO STAY UP LATE AND sleep in. A delayed body clock makes them feel more awake just when you wish they would go to bed. But new research shows why you should still try to help your teen develop better sleep habits.

An online survey of 2,017 middle and high-schoolers in Fairfax, Virginia, found that teens with late bedtimes and daytime sleepiness are more likely to struggle to manage their emotions, behavior, and school-related tasks. They may be forgetful, disorganized, or impulsive.

Better Sleep

TAKE AN ENCOURAGING, NOT PUNITIVE APPROACH TO YOUR TEEN'S SLEEP HABITS, ADVISES PEDIATRIC SLEEP SPECIALIST **SUJAY KANSAGRA, MD**

APPEAL TO TEEN CONCERNS

Point out consequences they care about, such as being tardy or missing out on morning activities with friends.

FIND ROLE MODELS

NBA players have talked about how sleep helps them reach their peak performance.

TAKE SMALL STEPS

Instead of fighting about the phone at bedtime, ask your teen to lower the brightness or set it on night mode with the sound off.

SHIFT BEDTIMES SLOWLY

Encourage bedtime just 15 minutes earlier than usual. Ask your pediatrician about melatonin, an over-the-counter supplement that helps shift the circadian rhythm.