



BRISBANE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Sleep

Parent Information

The Role of Sleep

When we sleep, our bodies are busy with vital activities including consolidating memories, repairing tissue and synthesising hormones. Sleep deprivation can lead to serious problems including irritability, fatigue, mood swings, lack of concentration, impaired school performance, stress, anxiety and even depression.

While every child's sleep needs are different, experts suggest that teenagers need eight to 10 hours of sleep each night. Research shows that children and teens who do not get enough sleep face challenges to their health, safety, performance and ability to learn.

According to Melbourne clinical psychologist and MindMatters panellist Andrew Fuller, ensuring teenagers get adequate sleep is one of the most powerful ways to protect them from depression and other health problems.

According to Fuller, the structures in the brain that support the most powerful anti-depressant – serotonin – are built and repaired between the sixth and the eighth hour of sleep. He also suggests that getting less than 6 hours of sleep a night can have the same effect as a .05 blood alcohol level.

Helping our boys establish good sleeping habits from a young age, and reminding them of the importance of sleep, will support their wellbeing and help them achieve success.

What are the experts saying?

- Adolescents need between 8 and 10 hours of sleep every night, although most sleep about 6.5 to 7.5 hours a night on average.¹
- Insufficient sleep is linked to:
 - reduced alertness and concentration¹
 - poorer academic performance¹
 - memory impairment¹
 - feelings of irritability and impaired moods^{1,3}
 - increased vulnerability to stress²
 - negative mental wellbeing impacts¹
 - increased risk of depression, anxiety and low self-esteem¹
 - poor decision making³
 - behavioural issues (e.g. aggressiveness and social withdrawal)³
- Adolescents are biologically programmed to stay up late, making it difficult for them to get the 8 to 10 hours of sleep required for their bodies to function properly.³
- Sleep is essential to the healthy development of the adolescent brain. The brain's pre-frontal cortex – responsible for complex thinking and decision making, as well as emotional regulation – is one of the last areas of the brain to develop, and undergoes significant maturation during teenage years. This part of the brain is especially sensitive to the effects of sleep deprivation.³

REFERENCES

1. Department of Health and Human Services, State Government of Victoria. (2018). Better Health Channel: Teenagers and sleep. Retrieved from <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/teenagers-and-sleep>
2. Fuller, A. (n.d.). Depression proofing your kids. Retrieved from www.andrewfuller.com.au
3. Breus, M. (2017). Teens need more sleep than you think. Retrieved from <https://thesleepdoctor.com/2017/03/30/teens-need-sleep-think/>
4. National Sleep Foundation. (2020). Teens and Sleep. Retrieved from <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/teens-and-sleep>

What can you do?

To help your son get the required amount of quality sleep, encourage him to:

- Establish a pre-sleep routine an hour before bedtime to decompress and relax. Examples include reading, practising relaxation or meditation, taking a warm bath and removing technology devices.
- Maintain a healthy diet with foods containing magnesium and vitamin B6 to assist in nervous system regulation. Examples include leafy greens, almonds, bananas, poultry and dairy products.
- Eat dinner at least two hours before going to bed.
- Reduce sugar and caffeine intake.
- Establish healthy sleep routines by going to sleep and waking up at the same time every day, including weekends.
- Make the bedroom a technology-free zone by removing phones, tablets and television before bedtime.
- Get adequate physical activity during the day.
- Prioritise sleep over late-night studying.
- Use dim, yellow light before bedtime. This can be achieved with a bedside lamp.
- Avoid late afternoon naps.
- Keep his room at a cool but comfortable temperature.