

## Sleep Scheduling

The most common reason for lack of sleep in teenagers and young people is a condition called Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome or DSPS. If you are staying up beyond midnight on a regular basis, that is the biggest risk factor for DSPS. Your brain becomes used to the late sleeping time and cannot reset itself easily on command even when you want it to. Getting up at the normal time for school results in less than required sleep and, over a period of time, causes your brain to become starved of sleep. This causes problems not just for you but can also affect your family and relationships.

Once the late sleeping pattern is established, it is difficult for your brain to readjust quickly to a much earlier time. Your brain will need to re-learn the normal sleeping time gradually. The technique by which you can train your brain is called Sleep Scheduling. It is a simple technique but is highly effective if you can stick to the routine. The steps are as follows:

- Get out of bed within half an hour of the same time every day, including weekends, no matter how little or poorly you have slept.
- Calculate how much you sleep per night during a weekday (not weekend) and give yourself that much time plus an hour for bed. For example, if you find you are sleeping 5 hours and having to get up at 7am, then allot yourself 6 hours and go to bed at 1am, to start with.

- Lie in a dark room with your eyes closed and wait to fall off to sleep. You will be able to set this new sleeptime pattern within a few days. Do not use anything like TVs, Computers, games, music or any distraction at this time
- Stick to same timetable over weekends.
- As your body becomes accustomed to the fixed waking time, you may find that you are feeling tired earlier in the evening. This may take a while to happen. Once this happens, increase your sleep time by bringing forward the sleep time by 30-60 minutes. Make this the pattern for all days of the week including weekends.
- Repeat the above as many times as necessary till your body adjusts its sleep requirements and sets a bedtime for you.
- Stick to this bedtime and waking time as far as possible at all times. Once your body and brain gets the required amount of sleep you will start seeing and feeling the difference!

If you need further information please contact your Health Care Practitioner

Tel:

NHS Direct: **0845 4647**

Receive telephone advice from a doctor or nurse, 24 hours a day, or see [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) for more information.

[www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk](http://www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk)

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**SG** Sleep advice for teenagers



Sleep Guide for children and young people



Lack of sleep is a common problem for teenagers and young people. It is known to be associated with a large number of problems like feeling sleepy through the day, moodiness, poor attention and poor school performance. Even though the problem is well recognised, few people try to get help for it. Most conditions that cause a sleep problem in young people can be prevented or treated. You can ask for help from your school nurse or family doctor who will help you or send you to someone who can help. Getting a good night's sleep every night can make a really big difference to your life!

## The effects of longstanding lack of sleep

- Daytime sleepiness, tiredness and fatigue
- Mood changes and feeling more irritable
- Learning problems leading to poor school performance
- Problems with maintaining attention
- Poor memory
- Lack of motivation
- Increased reaction time leading to increased risk of accidents
- Increased intake of stimulant drinks like coffee, tea and coke
- Increased risk-taking behaviour

## What you need to do to sleep well

- Go to bed only when sleepy. If this is routinely very late e.g. after 11.00pm on weeknights and you find it difficult to get up for school in the morning, then you will need to bring forward your bedtime gradually (see information on Sleep Scheduling). Aim to schedule your sleep pattern so that you get to sleep between 9pm–10:00pm each night. Aim for about 8 to 9 hours sleep each night.
- Avoid smoking, coffee, drugs and alcohol as they stimulate your brain and prevent you from falling off to sleep. Stimulants like caffeine is contained in all cola drinks, including the diet colas, chocolate drinks, tea and coffee.

- Take regular exercise (minimum 20 minutes) at least three times a week. However, avoid heavy exercise within 2 hours of bedtime as this may have the opposite effect.
- Keep your bedroom dark, quiet and make sure the bed is comfortable.
- Give yourself 30 minutes of “quiet time” before getting into bed. Use this time for reading or just relaxing. You may even want to just lie in a dark quiet room with your eyes closed.
- Do not use telephone/mobile, radio, television, computer, chat sites, video games or exciting music in the ‘quiet time’. These activities are more likely to excite your brain and prevent you from falling off to sleep.
- Get into a bedtime routine. A bath may be relaxing, but not too hot or too cold as this may have the opposite effect.
- Do your worrying before you go to bed rather than afterwards. Write down your worries or your next days “To Do” list onto a note pad that is kept in the bedroom. Discuss your worries with your parents and friends when you can as this often helps.
- Avoid clock watching at night, it is unnecessary and can make you worry more.
- Try to wake at about the same time all days of the week, including weekends. The occasional ‘special occasion’ is fine but should not be the rule for weekends.