



Healthy Sleep—It's More Than Just Physical Rest

Restful sleep is essential for our brains and bodies to function properly. Good sleep habits are especially important for young people because it supports emotional balance, while also helping them learn, focus and manage stress. When sleep is consistent and restorative, it supports our overall well-being.

Beyond Physical Rest

While enduring one day without proper sleep can feel manageable, repetitive inadequate sleep can become problematic. When someone hasn't gotten the necessary amount of sleep, they are more likely to:

- Struggle with mood swings, anxiety or irritability
- Have difficulty concentrating or making decisions, impacting school and work
- Seek “easy fixes” to feel better — this can include drugs and alcohol
- Have increased risks for mental health and substance use issues
- Experience headaches, get sick or feel ill more frequently

However, healthy sleep can act as a protective factor and mitigate harmful risks. Regular proper sleep can:

- Improve the ability to emotionally regulate and increase resilience over time
- Strengthen impulse control and decision making
- Reduce stress
- Increase energy and motivation to engage in positive activities, such as hobbies, physical movement and spending time with friends and loved ones
- Reduce headaches and support the immune system to fight off illnesses

In these ways, healthy sleep can not only make you feel better, but can keep you safer and support you in making informed choices for yourself throughout the day.

What Does Healthy Sleep Look Like?

Good quality sleep should leave you feeling well rested and restored. Take some time and consider if:

- You get the recommended amount of uninterrupted sleep per night: 7-10 hours for teens and 7-9 hours for adults.
- You wake feeling refreshed and ready for the day.
- You have enough energy to complete daily tasks.

Understanding what healthy sleep looks like can give you a framework to try to keep yourself on track!

Tips to Improve Your Sleep

- **Keep a consistent sleep schedule.** Go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day, including weekends.
- **Create a wind-down routine.** Be consistent before bed: read, listen to guided meditations, incorporate soothing scents or practice gentle movements.
- **Limit screen time.** Try to stop using devices 30-60 minutes before bedtime to minimize blue light exposure and to signal to your body it is time to rest.
- **Keep your space sleep-friendly.** Think about what may interrupt your sleep and address it. Is there light filtering in when it should be dark? Use black-out curtains. Is the room too hot or too cold? Adjust the thermostat or use lighter or heavier bedding. Are there noises that distract you? Try a white noise machine or comfortable earplugs.
- **Limit caffeine.** Be mindful of your caffeine intake—such as coffee, energy drinks, chocolate or soda—especially later in the day. The amount of caffeine you have in a day, and when you have it, can impact your ability to get a restful night's sleep.
- **Stay active during the day.** Moving your body and being active can help use up energy and support your sleep cycles.
- **Aim to fall asleep within 20-30 minutes of going to bed.** Leave the doom scrolling for tomorrow!

Healthy sleep habits are not only a form of self-care but are a protective factor that can reduce risks and prioritize overall health and well-being. When you are well rested, you are better equipped to cope with challenges, manage your emotions and make healthy decisions.