

## Sleep and Mental Health: Best Practices

According to the World Health Organization, teens are recommended to obtain 8-10 hours of sleep within a 24 hour period. Young adults are recommended at least 7 hours, respectively. According to recent national surveys, 69% of high school students were found to get 7 or fewer hours of sleep per night<sup>1</sup> while the rate of insomnia was 23.8% in adolescents<sup>2</sup>. Sleep is thought to now have a bidirectional relationship with mental health<sup>3</sup> and when individuals struggle with depression and anxiety, sleep problems such as insomnia and/or hypersomnia are likely to be experienced.

To aid in combating these problems, one should increase awareness and develop better sleep hygiene. Here are some ways to improve overall sleep hygiene: <sup>4</sup>

- Creating a set bedtime and maintaining a steady sleep schedule
- Identifying helpful skills to wind down and incorporating these skills into the routine
  - Examples of skills to use to help wind down include relaxation techniques, meditation and breathing exercises
- Avoiding caffeine in the evening
- Dimming lights and putting away electronics at least an hour before bedtime
  - For electronics, attempt to put the charging/docking stations outside the bedroom to decrease likelihood of staying on the phone
- Utilizing regular exercise during the day
- Creating a supportive and relaxing environment in the bedroom (e.g., comfortable mattress, pillows, and bedding)
- Blocking out excess light and sound that could disrupt sleep
- Try an alarm that utilizes “daylight” as a form of waking one up
- Be intentional with naps; try to keep them between 10-20 minutes in length as research has demonstrated this time frame can help regulate our emotions more effectively, reduce sleepiness, lead to better performance in daily tasks and cognitive functioning. <sup>5 6 7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Suni, E. and Dimitriu, A., 2020. *Sleep for Teenagers | Sleep Foundation*. [online] Sleepfoundation.org. Available at: <<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/teens-and-sleep>> [Accessed 18 November 2021].

<sup>2</sup> Donskoy I, Loghmanee D. Insomnia in Adolescence. *Medical Sciences*. 2018; 6(3):72. <https://doi.org/10.3390/medsci6030072>

<sup>3</sup> Scott AJ, Webb TL, Rowse G. Does improving sleep lead to better mental health? A protocol for a metaanalytic review of randomised controlled trials. *BMJ Open* 2017;7:e016873. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2017-016873

<sup>4</sup> Suni, E. and Dimitriu, A., 2020. *Mental Health and Sleep | Sleep Foundation*. [online] Sleepfoundation.org. Available at: <<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/mental-health>> [Accessed 18 November 2021].

<sup>5</sup> Newsom, R. and Dimitriu, A., 2021. *Depression and Sleep | Sleep Foundation*. [online] Sleepfoundation.org. Available at: <<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/mental-health/depression-and-sleep>> [Accessed 18 November 2021].

<sup>6</sup> Fry, A. and Truong, K., 2020. *Napping: Health Benefits & Tips for Your Best Nap | Sleep Foundation*. [online] Sleepfoundation.org. Available at: <<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene/napping>> [Accessed 18 November 2021].

<sup>7</sup> Lim, J., Lo, J. and Chee, M., 2017. Assessing the benefits of napping and short rest breaks on processing speed in sleep-restricted adolescents. *Journal of Sleep Research*, 26(2), pp.219-226.