

OUR VISION
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Supporting health and well-being



The Importance of Getting a Good Night's Sleep



Introduction

- During this school closure, a number of families have contacted our Pastoral Care Team regarding their young person's sleeping pattern.
- We realise that by not being at school it can affect a young person's daily routine.
- In response to these calls, we have brought together some advice from Sleep Scotland regarding how families can help to support a good night's sleep.

The Body Clock



Virtually every animal has a **body clock that governs their circadian rhythm** – Our body clocks are affected by external factors which, in turn, affect our internal rhythm, such as light, temperature, meal times and social activities. These are all important for keeping our body clock in rhythm and letting our body know when it is time to do different functions such as sleep, eat or be alert and able to concentrate.

It is as a result of our circadian rhythm that we are most likely to want to sleep during the dark hours of the late evening and early morning.

Our body clock manages:



Release of certain hormones



Sleep



Kidney function



Temperature

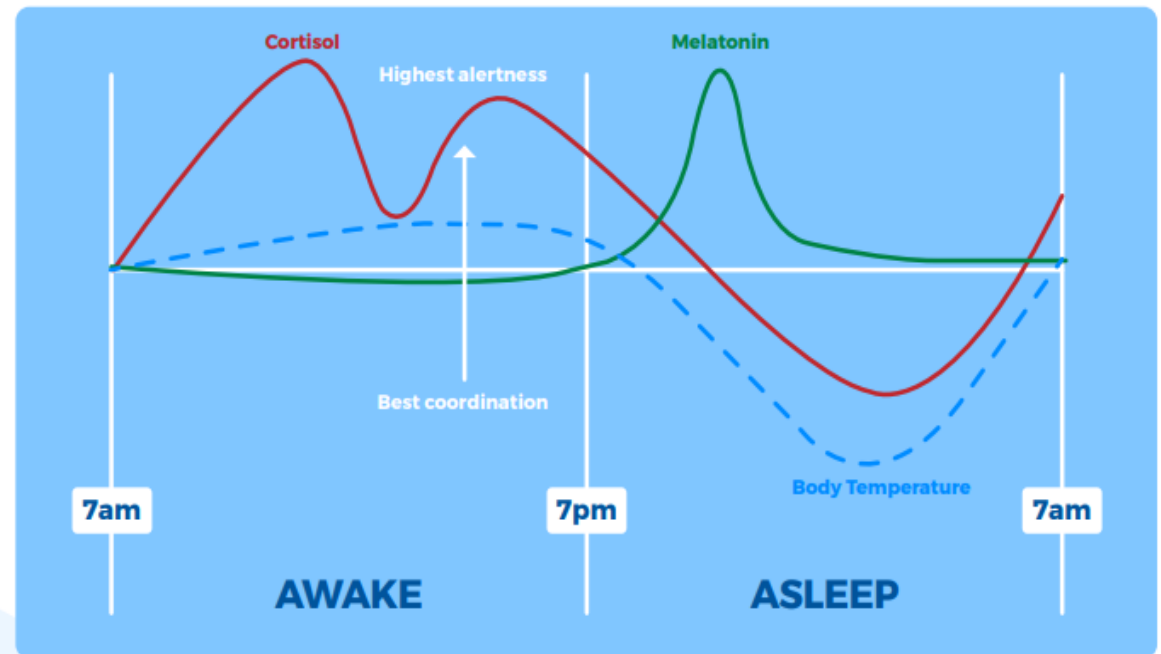


Muscle response

Our body clock prompts the release of **two hormones which affect our sleep:**

Melatonin – often called the 'sleepy hormone' because its release is one of the triggers that tells the body that it is time to prepare for sleep. Melatonin is released in response to the change from light to dark.

Cortisol – often called the 'stress hormone' because it wakes us up in the morning. Our bodies also create cortisol when we are stimulated. This can be from stress, anxiety or when we are excited. For children, lots of activities can create cortisol in the body such as playing with friends, watching TV or exercising. If we have too much cortisol in our bodies before bed, it will stop us falling asleep.



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The Body Clock (continued)



Disruption to the body clock, or the jet lag effect, is created when a change occurs to your body's settling and waking times. This can often happen at the weekend if an individual goes to bed much later on a Friday and Saturday night and rises much later on a Saturday and Sunday.

The result can be equivalent to travelling across a different time zone and forcing your body to wake and sleep at a different time than your body clock expects. This change occurs again come Monday morning when the individual's waking and settling times are brought forward.

This jet lag effect can make us feel groggy and tired during the day. Mental and physical performance will also be reduced.

Impacts on your sleep

- **Difficulty falling asleep** – by trying to sleep when your body clock is not expecting to, and it is still set on 'wake'. This can be especially pronounced on Sunday night and continue for a few days until your body clock resets itself.
- **Reduced sleep time** – changes in your body clock can disrupt sleep and lead to reduced sleep. If it takes you longer to fall asleep, but you have to wake at a set time, it will reduce your sleep time, leading to sleep deprivation and associated health problems.
- **Difficulty waking in the morning** – if your body clock is set to 'sleep' and you are forcing it to wake up in order to get ready for school or work, you may feel groggy, have a headache, feel easily upset or angry, and nauseous.

These effects may last for a few days before your body clock resets itself. If an individual changes their sleeping and waking times every weekend, it means that they may experience prolonged sleep disruption and sleep deprivation due to constant jet lag effect. This may result in long-term mental and physical health problems.

Sleep and Wellbeing

As your teen grows and goes through the stages of development, it is crucial they are getting enough sleep to support them. Sleep not only refreshes your teen's mind and body but also enhances their body functions.

Benefits of a good night's sleep for your adolescent:



Boosts immunity



Improves memory



Assists learning



Maintains physical and emotional health



Helps the body to repair itself



Promotes growth



Supports a healthy weight

What might be stopping your teen from sleeping?



Their Routine

To make sure their bodies are creating melatonin and reducing cortisol at the right times, children need to have a consistent routine which signals to their body that it's time to sleep. Changes in bedtime routine or exciting activities just before bed can stop children from sleeping.

- Make sure there is time to go outside and be active during the day, ideally before dinner. Getting daylight in the morning is helpful.
- Try to avoid your teen having a nap after 2pm. This includes falling asleep on the bus or in front of the TV. Many teens spend a lot of time in their room, and a falling asleep after school is common.
- Avoid stimulating activities which are loud or energetic in the hour before bed. Instead encourage your teen to have wind down activities, such as drawing, reading, or listening to music or audio books.
- Ensure your teen understands the importance of going to bed and waking up at the same time every day – even at the weekends!

Their Environment

Many teens spend a lot of time in their bedrooms during the day, but it's important that bedrooms become quiet, calm and dark before bedtime. Any stimulation before bed may keep your child awake. This could include sleeping in the same room as siblings, or spending time on electronic devices before bed.

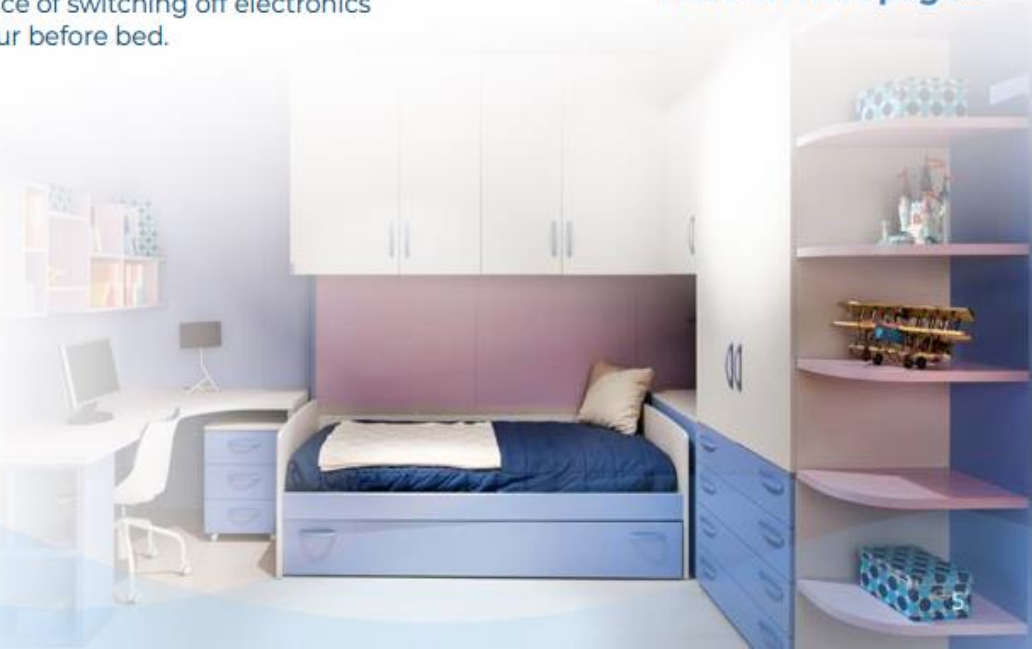
- Where possible, try to ensure your teen has a quiet, calm, dark bedroom to sleep in.
- Make sure your teen understands the importance of switching off electronics in the hour before bed.

Lights & Electronics

If your teen is interacting with anything that produces light before bed, this could be keeping them awake. While phones, TVs or tablets may seem to have a calming influence, the blue light emitted by screens is likely to prevent their bodies creating melatonin and the interaction can increase cortisol levels.

- Avoid activities which use screens an hour before bed and keep screens out of their bedroom. This will likely need some negotiation!

More on next page...



Their Diet

Without regular meal times, your teen's body clock can struggle to regulate sleep consistently. Stimulants such as sugar and caffeine, especially in the evening will prevent sleep. Snacks less than an hour before bedtime may also disrupt their sleep.

- Avoid any stimulating food or drinks including chocolate, coffee, tea, or cola in the late afternoon or evening.
- If they want a snack after dinnertime, try milk, toast or a banana, and have this is at least an hour before bed.

Anxiety

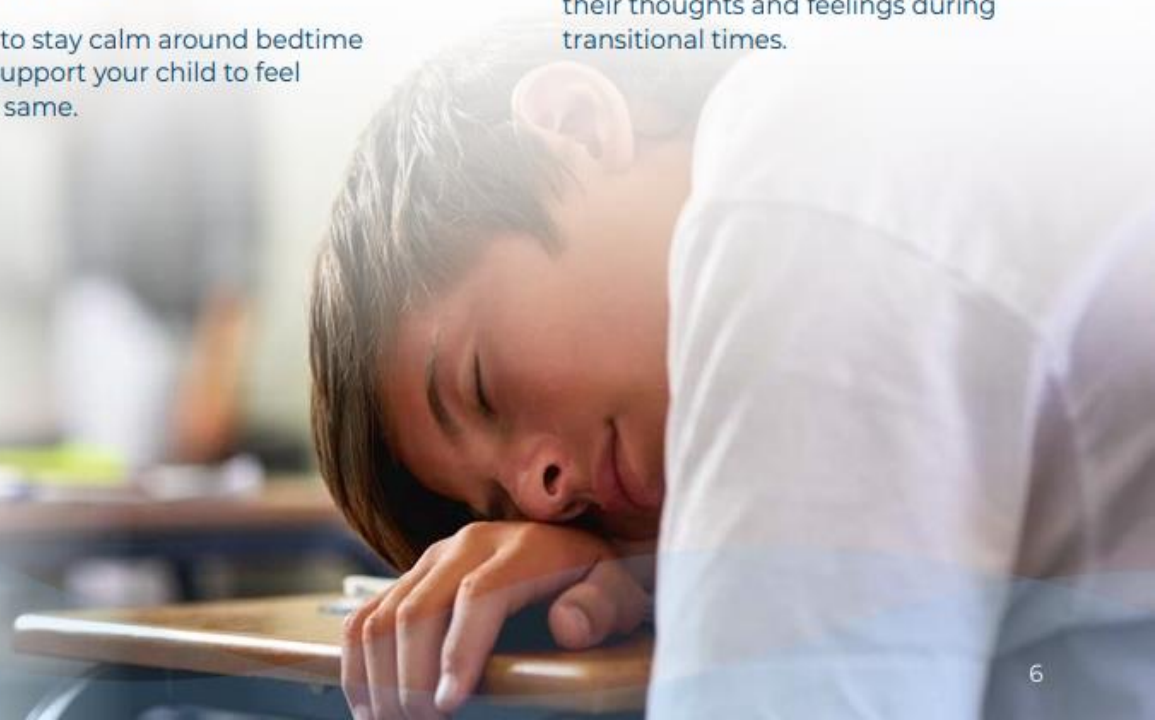
There's lots of things that may make our young people anxious and this creates cortisol in their bodies before bed. Some are anxious about school, exams, relationships, and even not being able to fall asleep. Encourage your teen to express how they are feeling and talk about what is making them feel this way. Do this earlier in the day, so they don't bring those feelings to the bedroom.

- Find ways to relax together using relaxation techniques, yoga or mindfulness.
- Try to stay calm around bedtime to support your child to feel the same.

Changes In Their Life

This could be things such as leaving school, bereavement, or parents separating. Big changes in life may make it hard for your teen to relax before bed or may make their routine inconsistent, which could disrupt their body clock.

- Do what you can to give your teen as much consistency as possible, and encourage them to take charge and do the same.
- Reassure them that they can talk about their thoughts and feelings during transitional times.



Example of a good bedtime routine for a 14 year old who is getting up around 7am. This can be used as a rough guide, but you might want to adjust timings and activities to suit your family. Create the plan with your teen so they can take charge of their own sleep. Remember that consistency is key!

A Good Bedtime Schedule

Time	Activity
4:00pm	After school clubs / time with friends
5:30pm	Evening meal
6:00pm	Stimulating activity - exercise, screen time, complete homework
8pm	Snack/supper, if needed
8:30pm	Wind down activity
9:00pm	Relaxing bath
9:30pm	Read or listen to music or an audio book
9:45pm	Lights out

Average Sleep Needs

Age	Recommended
Early secondary-aged children 11-13 years	9 to 11 hours
Teenagers 14-17 years	8 to 10 hours
Young adults 18-25 years	7 to 9 hours

Based on recommendations by the National Sleep Foundation. These are guidance, but everyone is different. Use a school holiday for your teen to sleep as long as they need to, to find out how much sleep they need.

Before Bed:

- Avoid sleeping after 2pm
- No TV etc. an hour before bed
- Quiet, wind down time
- Snack if required, e.g. toast, cereal, milky drink
- Avoid sweets/ biscuits, fizzy drinks, tea, coffee, hot chocolate
- An hour before bed, aim to leave the day behind and prepare for sleep onset

Bedtime:

- Consistent bedtime and waking
- Carry out steps in same order each night
- Have a bath, wind down, chill out
- Read, or listen to relaxing music
- Try a relaxation technique to help drift off
- Keep bedroom dark and cool
- Use subdued lighting

Crucial elements

- Consistency
- Timing
- Diet
- Exercise
- Daytime behaviour



Checklist for sleepy teenagers



If you recognise any of these you may be suffering from sleep deprivation

Do you..

Find it difficult to wake up in the morning or sleep through the alarm?

Find that you are bad tempered, cross and feel more angry during the afternoon?

Fall asleep spontaneously if you are sitting quietly?

Sleep much longer at the weekend compared to school nights?

Sometimes feel very down, or very anxious or stressed and unable to cope?

Sometimes feel emotional or start crying for no reason?

Find it difficult to concentrate or focus at school in lessons?

Use your mobile phone or play computer games after you've gone to bed?

Often feel tired or lethargic during the day?

Find that your hand/eye coordination is not very good?

Find that you are accident prone, tripping over a lot or dropping things?

Find it difficult sometimes to control your behaviour, take unnecessary risks and do silly things?



How to sleep well



The checklist

Set a regular bedtime and stick to it, give or take half an hour	
Exercise regularly during the day	
Have the right amount of sunlight exposure each day. At least 30 minutes early in the day	
Do not nap, especially after 3.00pm	
Complete your homework earlier in the evening, so you can relax in the evening	
Share your worries with someone you trust or keep a diary and write them down	
Avoid stimulants such as tea, coffee, chocolate, late food, alcohol, drugs and soft drinks with high caffeine levels	
Unwind in the evening by keeping the lights low	
Have good curtains that keep your bedroom dark. Keep the temperature of your bedroom cool	
Get your bedroom ready for bedtime. Tidy so it feels relaxing and make your bed so you're comfortable. Change your bed linen regularly and keep it fresh	
Plan something relaxing before you go to bed - a nice warm bath is great	
Avoid watching anything stimulating, scary or exciting before you go to bed	
Avoid using the phone, texting, playing computer games or watching TV or DVDs in bed or the hour before bedtime	
Try not to clock watch in bed, if you're struggling getting to sleep, try a relaxation technique	
If you must have sound in the background, play something soft and relaxing like natural sounds or gentle music	



Time to relax...

Here are some relaxation techniques that families may wish to try at home to help support a good night's sleep



Relaxation techniques

How to switch your mind off and relax once you're in bed



STEP 1: BREATHING SLOWLY

- Make yourself comfortable in your bed.
- Lie on your back and just let your body go as floppy as possible.
- Rest your arms by your side.
- Think about your breathing.
- Take a deep breath in, hold it and count to three - then let your breath out slowly.
- Take another deep breath, hold it and count to four - then let your breath out slowly.
- Take one more deep breath, hold it and count to five - then as before, let your breath out slowly.

STEP 2: RELAXING YOUR BODY

- Breathe normally in and out
- Clench your fists - then unclench your hands so that you feel all the muscles in your fingers relax.
- Tense all the muscles in your arms, right down from your shoulders and then hold for one breath in and out.
- Relax your arms.
- Tense all the muscles across your chest and hold for one breath in and out.
- Relax your chest.
- Tense and hold all the muscles in the lower half of your body and hold that for one breath in and out.
- Relax your lower body
- Clench your toes and feet and hold for one breath in and out.
- Relax your toes and feet.

STEP 3: RELAXING YOUR MIND

- Think about a place where you usually feel happy and relaxed.
- It can be somewhere that you have been already like;
 - where you went on holiday
 - your granny's sofa, watching TV
- Or you can make up a place in your imagination – somewhere peaceful like;
 - a beach
 - a dark green forest
 - a fluffy cloud in the sky
 - floating on an inflatable in the middle of a swimming pool
- Make the picture as clear as you can in your mind
- Let your body relax even more
- When you breath out you can think of the word 'calm' with

Practice this routine in bed each night and like any routine, your body will get used to it and you should start to find it easier to relax and get to sleep.



OTHER THINGS TO TRY

- Counting sheep (or anything else you want to count) in your head. Picture what your counting as clearly as you can.
- Thinking of a name (or a fruit or a vegetable) beginning with each letter of the alphabet. Don't worry if you miss a few out.
- Counting backwards from 300 (or any number you choose).

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Further information and support
is available to families:

- Sleep Scotland offer face-to-face counselling to help support families – www.sleepscotland.org
- Sleep support helpline – 0800 138 6565 (Monday to Thursday 10am – 4pm)