

Teen Talk



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A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE BOSTON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL LEAGUE'S RESOURCE CENTER

Go to Sleep! — By Monica



Many teens don't get a sufficient amount of sleep due to busy schedules, but scientists are now looking at the role that technology plays with sleep. Sleep plays an extremely important role in overall health and well-being, and the way you feel throughout the day is often a reflection on how much sleep you got the night before.

Intrigued with understanding the meaning of "sleep hygiene", I contacted Dr. Susan Gray (an adolescent and young adult medicine doctor at Boston Children's Hospital) and asked her the following questions:

What are some of the most important things teens should know about sleep?

"The most important thing to know about sleep is that it's absolutely necessary for physical and mental health."

"The second most important thing to know is that to get the best sleep, you need your bedroom to be dark, quiet, cold, and technology-free. That means no TV, no radio, no phone, no computer. Many teens tell me that they can't sleep without their smartphone or other hand held device by their side. I challenge them to try the dark, quiet, cold, and tech-free bedroom for a month. I have yet to have a patient tell me they don't sleep better. It's because even when we're asleep, our brains pay attention to noise and light. You have to get rid of noise and light to sleep well. Whatever your friends are texting you in the middle of the night can wait until the morning!"

Does sleep deprivation have long term effects?

"Yes, sleep deprivation or lack of sleep has long term effects. A study published in the Journal of Adolescent Health (Feb. 2014) suggests that even several years later, teens with poor sleep habits had lower grades and were more likely to be depressed."

Can naps throughout the day make up for lost sleep at night?

"Naps are not good substitutes for missed sleep at night because they alter your body's internal clock—the one that dictates when you should be awake or asleep. The best recipe for good sleep is to try to wake up at the same time every day—EVEN ON WEEKENDS—and avoid naps. If you follow this rule, you will not have a hard time falling asleep and sleeping through the night."

New Health Guides

Cholesterol, Fiber



Boston Children's Hospital
Center for Young Women's Health

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Winter Skin Care – By Jessica



Here are a few tips to make sure your skin stays healthy during the coldest months of the year.

1. Avoid alcohol based skin products such as toners and face masks. These products dry out your skin.
2. Keep your skin covered! When outside, wear gloves/mittens and earmuffs to protect your hands and ears. Dress warm and comfortably. If clothing including gloves/mittens get wet, change into dry clothing right away!
3. Don't use extremely hot water in the shower or tub. While a hot shower or bath may feel good on a cold day, the hot water actually breaks down the oils and lipids in your skin, which could lead to severe dryness and discomfort. Try to stick with lukewarm water. You can add oatmeal or baking soda but avoid bubble bath and other products that tend to dry out the skin. Don't forget to moisturize after your showers and baths, as your pores open up and take in the moisture quicker with longer lasting effects.
4. Always keep your skin hydrated. Having "hydrated" skin is another way of saying that your skin is moisturized. Keeping your skin moisturized can help prevent painful cracking and peeling of the skin, especially when your skin is exposed to cold temperatures. To ensure the best results for your skin, use lotion before enduring the cold outside and then again when you come inside.
5. Sunscreen isn't just for summertime—When planning to be outside, whether walking, skiing, sledding etc., the American Academy of Dermatologist suggests that you to apply a sunscreen with an SPF value of 30 or more (15 minutes before you go outside) to protect against broad spectrum UVA & UVB rays that can cause skin cancer. Use a lip balm with SPF too.
6. Look for fragrance-free lotions with humectants or ingredients such as: Glycerine, sorbital, and alpha hydroxyl acid, which are products that attract moisture. You don't have to spend a lot of money – just look for basic products with these ingredients.
7. If your skin is still dry after improving your skin care regime, make an appointment with your health care provider or dermatologist (skin expert).

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) – By Alexa

Your mood can change from day to day, but in some cases it can change from season to season. Do you experience feelings of sadness, tiredness, low energy, trouble concentrating, and or changes with your appetite or sleep for 2 weeks or more during the winter months? Some people believe that there is a certain type of depression that can affect people who live in areas that are far away from the equator. Although it's not an officially recognized as a medical diagnosis, there is a name for it – Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD. SAD is a type of depression that can affect both girls and guys of all ages, but it's more common among people who live in areas that are far away from the equator. For example, people living in New England are more likely to develop symptoms of SAD than people in Arizona.

There are two chemicals that our brains make, called serotonin and melatonin that help regulate our mood and sleep. Scientists believe that sunlight has a lot to do with how much of each hormone is made by the brain. Levels of melatonin tend to increase with minimal sunlight, resulting in fatigue, while lack of sunlight decreases the levels of the hormone serotonin, which is connected with symptoms of depression.

Symptoms that may occur with SAD are: changes in mood, trouble sleeping, loss of interest in doing things that a person normally enjoys, changes in appetite, difficulty concentrating, and lack of

socialization. These symptoms can affect a person's self-esteem, impact academic performance, and can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

SAD is treated in many different ways. Health care providers will usually recommend exposure to sunlight and/or, light therapy, and for some, talk therapy or counseling can be very helpful. You can increase your exposure to sunlight by going for walks outside, and participating in outside activities/sports. Light therapy is similar to natural light and is recommended for people with symptoms who have minimal time outside. The goal of treatment is to get the person back to feeling like themselves again.

So what can you do? If you think you or a friend/family member may be experiencing symptoms of SAD, try reaching out to your parent(s), guardian(s) or a trusted adult, and be sure to tell your health care provider. Depression is a serious thing, and if untreated it could get worse. Other medical conditions can cause similar symptoms, so it's important to make an appointment with your health care provider and get evaluated.

