



Know! To Encourage Better Sleep

May is nationally recognized as *Better Sleep Month* in an effort to bring awareness to the importance of sleep and to encourage people of all ages to improve their sleep patterns.

We know that sleep is essential to our physical, mental and emotional well-being. Those who get it live longer, better, healthier lives. Those who don't get it suffer the consequences: reduced memory, alertness and concentration, irritability and mood swings, stress and a weakened immune system. Lack of sleep makes us less productive at work or in school and our ability to reason and problem solve is compromised. If poor sleep continues or sleep disorders develop, we are at greater risk for substance abuse (self-medicating with alcohol or tranquilizers to promote sleep and/or abusing stimulants to remain awake and alert) and obesity as well as a number of diseases including diabetes, osteoporosis, hypertension, cardiac disease, stroke and certain cancers. There is no way around it; healthy sleep is an absolute necessity.

When it comes to children and teens in particular, a newly released study by the National Sleep Foundation revealed that young children and teens are getting neither the quality nor the quantity of healthy sleep that they desperately need.

While sleep needs vary for different age groups, and even among individuals, the general rule of thumb according to the National Sleep Foundation is:

School-age children (5-10 years of age) need between 10 -11 hours of sleep

Teens (11-17 years of age) need between 8.5-9.5 hours of sleep

Adults (18 and older) need between 7-9 hours of sleep

While the amount of sleep is vitally important, quality of sleep is also key. Electronic distractions appear to be the number one culprit preventing our children from getting quality sleep; with 3 out of 4 kids aged 6-17 having at least one electronic device in the bedroom. In addition to the brain being stimulated from the activity, experts say the background screen light of even a small cell phone or iPod is enough to disrupt brain chemicals.

After talking with your students about the importance of sleep, try sharing these tips to help them improve their quality of sleep:

- Strive to achieve the amount of sleep suggested for your age group;
- Be as consistent as possible with your sleep and awake schedules;
- Turn off and put away your electronics one hour before bed;

Talking regularly with kids about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using.

Know! urges you to encourage other parents to join Know!.

[Click here for the Know! Parent Tip Sign-Up Page.](#)

Know! is a program of:



*Lifetime Prevention
Lifetime Wellness*

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- Develop a relaxing, nightly routine where you read or listen to soothing music just before bed;
- Create a dark, quiet, comfortable and cool sleeping environment (between 54 and 75 degrees).

For more information on achieving better sleep, visit the [National Sleep Foundation](#).

Sources: [National Sleep Foundation: How Much Sleep Do We Really Need?](#), [What Health: Better Sleep Month 2014](#).