



Health Advisory: Healthy Sleep for Children and Teens During a Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted daily routines, altered sleep habits, and increased stress among children and adults alike. Schedules that allow children and teens to maintain daily routines and get sufficient sleep can improve learning, health, and mood.

Healthy sleep habits — which include regular bedtimes and wake times, elimination of electronics from the sleep environment, and consistent meal times and exercise — are more important than ever to promote health and well-being in children and adolescents.

School-aged children need 9 to 12 hours of sleep per night, and teens need 8 to 10 hours of nightly sleep. Students of all ages benefit from adequate and consistently timed sleep, but the pandemic has made it hard to maintain healthy sleep schedules, especially while navigating the challenges of pandemic-era school models. For example, sleep timing among children and teens has drifted later during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, traditional messaging to reduce “screen time” doesn’t fit well with distance learning, cancellation of sports and other activities, and physical distancing requirements. Teens may be more affected than younger children because they have a biological tendency to fall asleep and wake up later. For many teens, “social jet lag,” which is chronic misalignment between their natural sleep-wake rhythm and their daily activity schedule, has worsened during the pandemic.

To promote adequate sleep quality, quantity, and timing, as well as improved adjustment to new school routines, we advise:

1. Ensure your child routinely gets enough sleep for their age.
2. Keep regular bedtimes and wake times, even on weekends, to help address “social jet lag.”
3. Protect sleep by minimizing screen time before bed and avoiding screens during the sleep period.
4. Ensure regular schedules for activities and exercise, outdoors when possible.
5. Maintain regular meal times and encourage a healthy diet.

*Adopted by the AASM Executive Committee on behalf of the Board of Directors:
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The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) is a professional society that advances sleep care and enhances sleep health to improve lives (aasm.org).

A searchable directory of AASM-accredited member sleep centers is available at sleepeducation.org.