



Connect with Kids

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## Video Short

### Sleep and Depression

By CWK Network Producer

*"In order to feel rested, you have to achieve a certain percentage of deep sleep and dream sleep every day."*

-Francis Buda, M.D., Child Neurologist

Irritability, moodiness, problems at school, a drop in grades- all of these are the classic signs of a kid using drugs. But according to a new study by Columbia University there may be a more innocuous explanation- simply a lack of sleep.

And for many parents that means laying down the law on bedtime rules.

In the Gossett family, the ritual is the same: first, the boys brush their teeth, then a bath, and then maybe a story or two, but at 9:30 it's lights out.

"A lot of the time I want to stay up, watch a little bit more TV," says 11-year-old Gregory, "but usually when my parents tell me to I go."

The routine rarely varies.

Gregory's mom, Mary, has a simple reason: "Because I think children function better with a set routine they're familiar with."

In fact, according to a new study by Columbia University Medical Center, a lack of sleep can lead to depression, which in turn can cause kids to be impulsive, irritable, and aggressive.

According to the study, on average, American teens are getting less than eight hours sleep a night.

"In order to feel rested, you have to achieve a certain percentage of deep sleep and dream sleep every day," explains child neurologist, Dr. Francis Buda. "And that amount is dependent totally on your age and also somewhat on your genetic makeup."

Experts recommend 12 hours of sleep for a six-year-old, 10 hours for a 12-year-old and nine hours a night for a teenager.

And that can be a challenge in some families with busy schedules and odd hours.

Experts do say afternoon naps are risky: they can help sleep-deprived kids, but only if they're brief and part of a regular routine.

"Again, it's just a matter of what works for a given family. But again, [I] would just have to emphasize the consistency," says Dr. Buda.

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### Teen Sleep Cycles

By CWK Network, Inc.

A study performed by researchers at Stanford University found that teenagers require approximately one to two hours more sleep than 9- and 10-year-olds, who only require about eight hours of sleep. This goes against the school of thought that allows older kids to stay up later. Parents may want to be on the lookout for the following things, which could be caused from sleep deprivation:

- Difficulty waking in the morning
- Irritability in the afternoon
- Falling asleep during the day
- Oversleeping on the weekend
- Having difficulty remembering or concentrating
- Waking up often and having trouble going back to sleep

Sleep deprivation also can lead to extreme moodiness, poor performance in school and depression. Teens who aren't getting enough sleep also have a higher risk of having car accidents because of falling asleep behind the wheel.

## What Parents Need To Know

As the lives of children seem to be getting busier, their sleeping habits may be one of the first things impacted. Sleep, though being something that often gets sacrificed, is actually one of the most important things in a child's life. Here are some suggestions about sleep:

- Sleep is as important as food and air. Quantity and quality are very important. Most people need between seven-and-a-half to eight-and-a-half hours of uninterrupted sleep. If you want to press the snooze alarm in the morning you are not getting the sleep you need. This could be due to not enough time in bed, external disturbances or a sleep disorder.
- Keep regular hours. Try to go to bed at the same time and get up at the same time every day. Getting up at the same time is most important. Getting bright light, like the sun, when you get up will also help. Try to go to bed only when you are sleepy. Bright light in the morning at a regular time should help you feel sleepy at the same time every night.
- Stay away from stimulants like caffeine. This will help you get deep sleep, which is most refreshing. If you take any caffeine, take it in the morning. Avoid all stimulants in the evening, including chocolate, caffeinated sodas and caffeinated teas. They will delay sleep and increase awakenings during the night.
- Use the bed just for sleeping. Avoid watching television, using laptop computers or reading in bed. Bright light from these activities and subject matter may inhibit sleep. If it helps to read before sleeping, make sure you use a very small wattage bulb to read. A 15-watt bulb should be enough.
- Avoid bright light around the house before bed. Using dimmer switches in living rooms and bathrooms before bed can be helpful. Dimmer switches can be set to maximum brightness for morning routines.
- Don't stress if you feel you are not getting enough sleep. It will just make matters worse. Know you will sleep eventually.
- Avoid exercise near bedtime. No exercise at least three hours before bed.
- Don't go to bed hungry. Have a light snack, but avoid a heavy meal before bed.
- Bedtime routines are helpful for good sleep.
- Avoid looking at the clock if you wake up in the middle of the night. It can cause anxiety.
- If you can't get to sleep for over 30 minutes, get out of bed and do something boring in dim light till you are sleepy.
- Keep your bedroom at a comfortable temperature.
- If you have problems with noise in your environment, you can use a white noise generator. A fan will work.

## Resources

- [National Sleep Foundation](#)
- [American Sleep Apnea Association](#)

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