



GUARD YOUR **HEART**

GUARD YOUR **MIND**

GUARD YOUR **BODY**

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Understanding the Teen Brain

The Importance of Sleep

We probably aren't telling you something new by saying that getting adequate sleep is very important for one's health. However, you may not realize how critical it is to the development of the teen's learning capabilities, mood, and overall functioning. The idea that kids need less and less sleep as they get older is actually false—even though teenagers will try to convince you that they don't need as much sleep, they should actually be getting 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep every night. It might be no surprise that **85% of teens do not get the suggested amount of sleep, and with that comes consequences.**

Too much to do, no time to sleep

In a society that seems to never stop, sleep can seem like something for sissies. Many individuals, teens and adults, trick themselves into thinking that they will actually get more done by sleeping less—when it is actually quite the contrary. A study was done that tested how sleep effects one's productivity by restricting sleep to eight, six, and four hours a night for two weeks on different subjects. At first, those that got less than 8 hours of sleep admitted to being tired and lacking alertness, but by day 4, most had "adapted" to this amount of sleep thinking that they were doing fine after the initial adjustment. However, even though they thought they were doing good, their cognitive performances continued to plummet. This study helped prove that even if teens and/or adults think they are getting enough sleep to get by, they're still not getting enough to perform at their full potential. **Sleep deprivation can affect adolescents' ability to learn, to get along with others, and it can even increase the likelihood of smoking, drug abuse, pregnancy, and falling asleep behind the wheel of a car.** Stressing to teens how important sleep is to their health is not something to take lightly—it can obviously have severe consequences such as falling asleep while driving. It can also cause them to be more lax about their decision making; being too tired to care enough to say no to sex or try weed "just this once".



Benefits of Sleep

Sleep does not just rest the body like some might think, it actually provides more benefits for one's brain functioning. During the period of deep sleep (which you have to be asleep long enough to get there), the brain is actually very awake and active. It uses this time to do memory maintenance by sorting through knowledge it encountered during the day and filing away in its appropriate place. **Sleep helps the brain not only sort through and remember what it learned that day, but to gear up and make room to learn new things the next day.** This is why it is important for teens to get a good night's rest after learning something new *and* to prepare for an exam they might have the next day.

Circadian Rhythm

Circadian rhythm is a name given to the internal body clock that regulates the 24-hour cycle of biological processes. This is especially helpful in determining our sleeping patterns. These patterns naturally change throughout one's lifetime and is very distinct during adolescence. Right around puberty, the chemical responsible for sleepiness starts to be released later at night and turns off later in the morning. This could help explain why teens like to stay up late and wake up late; they aren't just being rebellious—for the most part they are merely responding to their bodies internal clock. This does not give teens an excuse to be lazy and think they can stay up until 2am and then sleep until noon, but it can help parents to be more understanding of what their teen's internal clock is telling them to do.

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Ways to help your teen get more sleep

While trying to convince your teen that they need to get more sleep might seem like an impossible task, there are some practical things you can do to at least encourage better sleep patterns:



- Don't let them have caffeinated drinks after lunch
- Avoid arousing activities around bedtime such as: *heavy studying, videogames, text messaging, etc.*
- Set a time for all electronics to be turned off: *TVs, stereos, cell phones, internet, etc.*
- Be a role model to them by making sleep a priority for yourself
- Don't let them sleep longer than 2-3 hours past their usual wake time on the weekends

For more information call: 816-836-8336 - To unsubscribe, please email bgray@guardyourself.org

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