

Mental Health & Well-being

BENEFITS OF SLEEP

Why Sleep Matters

When we don't get enough sleep, we feel it in many ways. A lack of sleep can impact our cognitive functioning, our physical health, and our social interactions. Mood disorders and anxiety can also be exacerbated by a lack of sleep. This snapshot presents some considerations for adequate sleep and some strategies that can help.



Healthy sleep for 6-12 year olds

Every child will have slightly different sleep needs, but sleeping for 9 to 12 hours every night is recommended for this age group. Adequate sleep at this age seems to promote healthier brain development. Children at this age are also encountering a ton of novelty - new concepts at school, new people, and new situations - that can be exhausting, and they need that time to recharge.



Slightly less for teenagers (but not by much)

The recommendation for teenagers is 8-10 hours. A combination of factors - academic pressures, social pressures (often in the form of social media), increased autonomy, early school start times, and something called the Circadian Phase Delay - make it very difficult for teenagers to get this much sleep.



Consequences of lost sleep

Cognitive - Concentration, problem solving, and memory can all be impaired by lost sleep

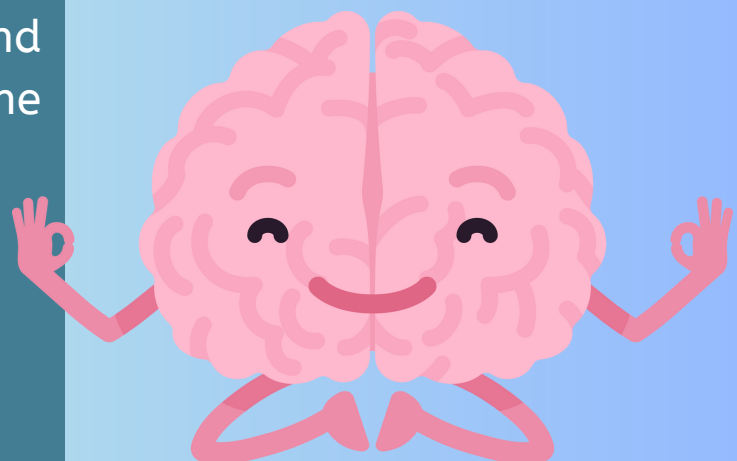
Behaviour - Poor sleep can contribute to impulsivity and hyperactivity

Emotional Regulation - Insufficient sleep can lead to irritability, mood swings, and an increased risk of developing mood disorders like depression and anxiety.



Video Resources

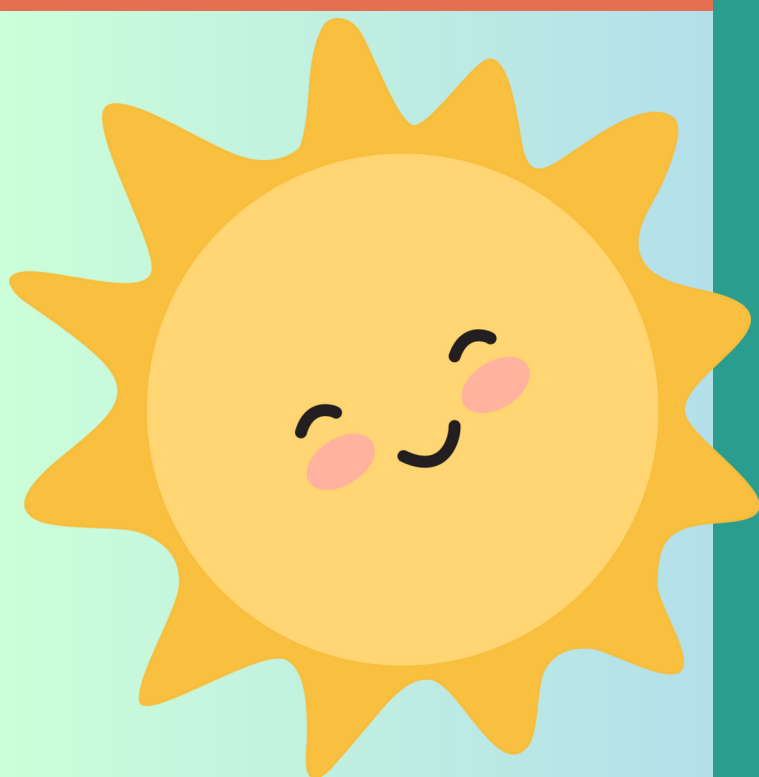
This short video animation from a TED talk outlines what happens when sleep deprivation is taken to an extreme, and some of the recent research around the restorative impact of a good night's rest. And in case you're still not convinced, here's another short video outlining how sleep can facilitate communication between different regions of the brain, and how those links are severed when we don't get enough sleep.



Quick fixes

A lot of the evidence around sleep suggests that for many people, some small lifestyle and environment changes can make a massive difference in sleep duration and quality.

[This short video](#) from a scientist studying sleep animates six tips to a better sleep.



Sleep readiness starts in the day

Finding ways to get outside in natural light and to fit exercise into every day, can help prime your body for sleep at night. Exercise too close to bedtime though, and your body may take longer to reach a state of relaxation, delaying sleep. Waking at consistent times, avoiding caffeine in the afternoon/evening, and limiting naps to 45 minutes will help as well.

Build a routine, and stick with it

Like wake times, consistent bedtimes will help your body prepare for sleep. Avoid screen time right before bed (ideally turn screens off a couple of hours before bedtime). Build a relaxing routine that includes some of the preparatory steps you need to take before bed - like brushing teeth - but also a calming activity such as reading a book or listening to relaxing music.



Environment matters

A room that is dark, quiet, and cool is your best bet for quality sleep. It also helps if you condition your body to expect sleep in that environment - that is, don't use your bed for schoolwork or watching videos.

And, importantly, if you can't sleep after 25 minutes or so, experts recommend getting up and doing another low-stimulus activity (like reading) before trying to sleep again.



Learn more at the links below

[Foundry - How to get a Better Sleep](#)

[Sleep on it Canada - Age-specific Dos and Don'ts](#)

[CSEP - Activity, Sedentary, and Sleep guidelines for Canadians](#)