

Good Sleep Hygiene

Spend time outside, especially in the morning.

Have regular, healthy meals.

No caffeine- coffee, cocoa, energy drinks late in the day. Avoid alcohol.

Get exercise, but not before bed.

Don't nap late in the day or before bedtime.

Set screens to "yellow" light at night.

Close to bedtime - No:

- Big meals
- Phones, computers or tablets
- Alcohol
- Caffeine – coffee, cocoa, energy drinks

Regularity is key.

- Have a regular bedtime routine that is relaxing for you (it should not include using screens).
- Have a regular morning wake time each day.
- Go to bed about the same time each night; choose a bedtime when you are usually tired.

Your bedroom should be cool, quiet and dark, and your bed should be comfortable.

No TV, phone, computer or tablet in your bedroom.

Don't spend too much time in bed "trying" to sleep. If you usually sleep about 8.5 hours, then try for a total time in bed of about 9 hours.

Still have trouble sleeping?

Speak to your GP. There are many reasons for sleep problems, some are medical, some are psychological, and some are both. Your GP can refer you to an appropriate sleep health professional.

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SLEEP AND YOUNG AUTISTIC ADULTS





How much Sleep?

On average, adolescents, age 14-17 years, need 8-10 hours sleep per night, and young adults, age 18-25 years, need 7-9 hours sleep.

Sleep Problems

Sleep problems are common in the general population, especially in children under 6 years and in adolescents. Many adults also report poor sleep.

The most common sleep problems are:

Insomnia: Difficulties falling asleep and/or staying asleep.

Circadian Sleep-Wake Disorders:

Delayed sleep: Not falling asleep till well after midnight and then waking late next day.

Advanced sleep: Falling asleep early in the evening and waking very early.

Delayed sleep is more common in adolescents and young adults.

“I am super noise sensitive and (if) something, anything, occurs; or the light level changes (it causes me sleep difficulties)”

SASLA participant

Why is Sleep Important?

Good sleep is important for attention, learning, memory and mental and physical health.

Poor sleep is associated with mental and physical health problems like anxiety, depression, diabetes and obesity.

Sleep in Adolescents and Young Adults

Sleep changes across the lifespan. Biological changes associated with puberty affect sleep timing. Adolescents and young adults tend to fall asleep later at night and wake later in the morning. Because school and work often start early, adolescents and young adults may not get enough sleep.



Sleep Problems and Autism

Most research has been done on children. Sleep problems are very common in autistic children, but we now know that many autistic adolescents and adults have poor sleep. Some autistic people may have sleep difficulties for many years.

Like non-autistic people, most commonly autistic people report insomnia and/or circadian sleep-wake problems.

In the Autism Co-operative Research Centre's study on school leavers (SASLA), about 60% of participants with autism (age 15-25 years) reported poor sleep quality, but many non-autistic participants also had poor sleep.

What Can I Do?

There are many simple things you can do to help get better sleep. Doing these things is often called practicing good sleep hygiene.