

# Supporting a Young Person's Sleep and Mental Health

Young People need more sleep than adults to ensure healthy mental and physical development. Good quality sleep is essential for mental health. Poor sleep in young people is linked to a greater risk of obesity, lower immunity and a negative impact on behaviour, mood and concentration. Sleep problems can include nightmares, night terrors, insomnia, sleep walking and frequent bed wetting.

## Statistics:

Research shows that most young people are not getting enough sleep. Young people are 3 times more likely to have mental health problems resulting from prolonged sleep deprivation.

## 10 TOP TIPS for supporting a young person's sleep and mental health:

- 1 Know sleep recommendations.** Children aged 6-13 should have 9-11 hours' sleep and young people aged 14-17 should have 8-10 hours' sleep per night (Sleep Scotland)
- 2 Make the bedroom sleep friendly.** For good quality sleep, the bedroom should be clean, comfortable and quiet. At bedtime, the room temperature should be 18-24°C, well ventilated, free from distractions and dark.
- 3 Maintain health and wellbeing.** Good nutrition and regular exercise improves sleep. Avoid caffeine, sugar, alcohol and large meals before bedtime.
- 4 Establish a consistent routine.** Encourage young people to go to bed and get up at similar times each day. Discourage day time napping or long lie-ins at the weekend.
- 5 Avoid screen technology.** The use of screens at bedtime is linked to young people having less sleep, poorer sleep quality, and increased tiredness. Blue light from screens is known to reduce sleep hormones. Keep bedrooms a screen-free zone and avoid using screens one hour before bedtime.
- 6 Relax before bed.** Encourage young people to wind down before bed. This might include a warm bath, reading a book, listening to calm music or mindfulness activities.
- 7 File worries away.** Help young people to unclutter their thoughts and worries before bedtime. For example, write down worries or make a 'to do' list for the next day.
- 8 Can't sleep? Get up.** Advice is to get up and do something they find relaxing (not screens!) until they feel sleepy again, then go back to bed.
- 9 Keep a sleep diary.** If sleep is a problem, completing a sleep diary over a two week period can help identify what's keeping them awake.
- 10 Encourage professional help.** If you are concerned about a young person's sleep problems, visit your GP or phone Sleep Scotland's helpline on: 0131 651 1392.

## Self-help links:

- [www.sleepscotland.org](http://www.sleepscotland.org)
- [www.sleepcouncil.org.uk](http://www.sleepcouncil.org.uk)
- [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)
- [www.minded.org.uk](http://www.minded.org.uk) – Sleep difficulties

