

The effects of sleep deprivation on teenagers



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Sleep Deprivation among teenagers in our country is a very serious issue that is increasing at an alarming rate. Many people believe that as we grow older, we require less sleep, so a teenager would not need as much sleep as a child, but this is very untrue. In fact, at the beginning of puberty your body clock, or circadian rhythm, changes. When this happens, a teenager will want to go to bed around 10 or 11, whereas they used to go to bed around 8. Most teens do not fully understand how important a good night's sleep is to their mind and body functionality. There are several reasons as to why these teens are being deprived of sleep, such as distractions like television or the Internet, a busy activity-filled lifestyle, or possibly because of health disorders such as insomnia or ADHD. One of the biggest reasons, however, is because of the fact that painfully early school times make it almost impossible to fit in the necessary amount of sleep. Whatever the reason, this lack of sleep can lead to many other physical, psychological, and social issues. Fortunately, there are a few ways to help fit some more Zzz's into a stress-filled teenage day. Teens need to be more informed on how serious sleep deprivation can be, and the effects it can lead to. Our sleep is divided into five stages, with which the brain cycles through about five to six times each night. " If sleep is cut short, the body doesn't have time to complete all of the phases needed for muscle repair, memory consolidation and release of hormones regulating growth and appetite. Then we wake up less prepared to concentrate, make decisions, or engage fully in school and social activities. " (Low, 2007). The average teenager needs around 9 hours of sleep per night, but most only get around 7 hours. This means that most students are not able to fully concentrate and function properly. High school is said to be one of the most important times in a person's life. A student's grades will

determine where he or she goes to college, and thus what they will do for a living in the future. It is very difficult though, to get good grades with school starting at such an early hour. A teen without enough sleep will have a very hard time concentrating and staying awake in class. In general, a student who goes to bed earlier will earn mostly A's and B's, whereas a student that does not get a good amount of sleep will earn mostly C's and D's. School officials are seriously damaging students by starting school times so early. There are also many other issues that can lead teenagers into sleep deprivation. With all the technological things these days, such as television, social networking websites, instant messaging, texting, etc., it is very easy to get distracted from the more necessary things. Teens will often underestimate the amount of time they need to finish their homework and save it for last minute causing them to stay up late hours getting it done. Many students will also put fun activities, such as hanging out with friends or playing videogames, before more important things like doing work. Sleep deprivation in teens, however, is not only caused by irresponsibility and bad decisions. There are also several medical and psychological conditions that can lead to sleep deprivation. Some of these conditions are, sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, diabetes, asthma, bipolar disorder, excessive anxiety and panic attacks, or depression. Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder or ADHD can also lead to sleep deprivation. According to Eileen Bailey, as many as 70%-80% of all patients with ADHD have difficulty sleeping (2007). Another huge cause of sleep deprivation in teenagers is stress. Teenager's lives are filled with stress everyday and this can really affect the way they sleep. Their stressors can be related to overworking, worrying about their grades or exams, or peer pressure from their classmates. " Stress can short-

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circuit your body and make it more or less forget how to relax and rest. " (" Medical Conditions That, " n. d.). If teens were put in stressful situations less often, their amount of sleep would greatly improve. These issues can lead to many physical effects. During sleep, the skin is being renewed and refreshed, so not getting enough sleep can be very damaging to the skin. It can lead to puffy bags and dark circles under the eyes, increased acne, or early signs of wrinkles. Lack of sleep can also lead to weight gain. When a person is sleeping, their body generates a hormone called ghrelin, which stimulates hunger, and the less you sleep the more ghrelin you produce. If you are not getting enough sleep, you are producing more ghrelin, and therefore feel hungry more often, and are less satisfied after a meal. These issues are especially dangerous in the case of a teenager, because most teens are very concerned about their looks and weight, so if they are gaining weight and getting more pimples, they can begin having feelings of anxiety and depression. Lack of sleep can also lead to psychological and social issues. Some effects can be hallucinations and changed emotions, speech, or memory. In a study done at Lafayette Clinic and Wayne State University, the effect of sleep deprivation on behavior, thinking, motor performance, and biological energy transfer systems was studied in a single subject who remained awake without drugs for 220 hours. Behavioral changes included irritability, paranoid thinking, expansiveness, grandiosity, hypnagogic states, visual hallucinations, and episodic rage (1959). Sleep deprived teenagers are also very prone to car accidents. Many car crashes have been caused by teens falling asleep at the wheel. These issues are not only harming the teenagers themselves, but the people around them as well. Luckily, there are a few ways to help teenagers get as much sleep as possible. One way is <https://assignbuster.com/the-effects-of-sleep-deprivation-on-teenagers/>

to make sure that the sleeping environment is dark and quiet, and to avoid doing stimulating things before going to sleep, such as playing videogames or watching television. Many people believe that the TV is helping them, but it is actually doing the opposite. If a person becomes used to watching the TV at night, they will feel as if the television is necessary for them to fall asleep, which causes very bad sleeping habits. Staying away from caffeinated drinks and alcohol as much as possible can also reduce sleep deprivation. The caffeine and other stimulants in the beverages make it very difficult to fall asleep. Physical activity also plays a huge role in good sleep. A teenager that does daily exercises and eats healthy generally has an easier time falling asleep. Another option would be to cut back on extracurricular activities so you can make enough time for yourself to get to sleep on time. Sleep deprivation in our youth is clearly a very serious issue that leads to many negative effects. These effects, whether physical, psychological or social, are having very harmful effects on both teenagers and the people around them. If schools would increase their start times and teenagers were more seriously informed about the dangers of cutting on sleep and pulling all-nighters our country might have a slightly smaller percentage of sleep deprived teens. However the numbers would still be high because of stress and other medical conditions. Sleep is an essential part of life that should not be ignored.