

**NATIONAL SLEEP FOUNDATION
2006 *SLEEP IN AMERICA* POLL
HIGHLIGHTS AND KEY FINDINGS**

The National Sleep Foundation's 2006 *Sleep in America* poll finds that America's adolescents (6th-12th grade) are not getting the sleep they need, and this lack of sleep gets worse as they progress through their teen years.

While most students know they're not getting the sleep they need, parents are in the dark about their adolescents' sleep.

- Just one in five adolescents get an optimal nine hours of sleep on school nights; nearly one-half (45%) sleep less than eight hours on school nights.
- The average 6th-grader sleeps an average of 8.4 hours on school nights, while a typical high school senior sleeps just 6.9 hours.
 - Over the course of a week, high school seniors miss nearly 12 hours (11.7) of needed sleep!
- More than half of adolescents report feeling too tired or sleepy during the day.
- More than half of adolescents say they know they get less sleep than they need to feel their best.
- Nine out of 10 parents believe their adolescent is getting enough sleep at least a few nights during the school week, leaving an "awareness gap" between parents and teens.

Teens are sleepy at times and places where they should be fully awake -- at school, at home and on the road.

School:

- Sending students to school sleepy is like sending them to school without breakfast. They just don't have a basic necessity that helps them feel and function their best.
 - At least once a week, more than one-quarter of high school students fall asleep in school, 22% fall asleep doing homework, and 14% arrive late or miss school because they oversleep.

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- 80% of adolescents who get an optimal amount of sleep say they're achieving As and Bs in school, while adolescents who get insufficient amounts of sleep are more likely than their peers to get lower grades.

Mood:

- A strong association was found between negative moods and more pronounced sleep-related issues.
 - Among those adolescents say they're unhappy or tense most often, 73% feel they don't get enough sleep at night and 59% are too sleepy during the day.
 - Teens who slept 9+ hours on school nights reported much more positive moods than their peers.
- Those adolescents who most often felt unhappy or sad than their peers were also more likely to fall asleep in school, have difficulty falling asleep at night and think they have a sleep problem. In addition, they have more trouble getting along with their family.

Drowsy Driving:

- Sleepiness in any driver – including teenage drivers – is extremely dangerous for themselves and others.
 - More than one-half of adolescent drivers have driven drowsy during the past year.
 - In fact, 15% of drivers in 10th to 12th grades drive drowsy at least *once a week*. This percentage mirrors the 2005 NSF poll finding that 14% of adults (ages 18 and up) drive drowsy at least once a week.

Teens' internal clocks battle with school clocks, and it's sleep that loses out.

- As children reach adolescence, their circadian rhythms – or internal clocks – tend to shift, causing teens to naturally feel more alert later at night and wake up later in the morning.
- This natural shift in teens' internal clocks is often at odds with classroom clocks, with school often starting at times that teens naturally expect to be asleep – in their beds, not at their desks!
 - More than one-half of high school seniors go to bed at 11:00 p.m. or later on school nights.
 - Adolescents, regardless of age, wake up around 6:30 a.m. for school, leaving many students with an inadequate period for sleep.
- On the weekends, adolescents sleep longer than they do during the school week, but they're not sleeping enough to catch up on the amount of sleep lost on school nights.

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- Overall, adolescents get an average of 8.9 hours of sleep on a non-school night, about equal to the optimal amount recommended per night.
- Like school nights, the poll finds the amount of sleep on weekends trends downward as adolescents get older. Sixth-graders get 9.2 hours of sleep on non-school nights, while 12th-graders get just 8.4 hours.
- Sleepy adolescents are more likely to rely on naps, which experts say should complement, not substitute for, a good night's sleep. Their naps average 1.2 hours, well beyond the 45-minute maximum recommended so that nighttime sleep is not affected.
- About one-third (31%) of adolescents take naps regularly, and these nappers are more likely to say they feel cranky or irritable, too tired during the day, and fall asleep in school – all signs of insufficient sleep.

Caffeine and tech toys also take their toll on adolescent sleep.

Caffeine:

- Three-quarters of adolescents report drinking at least one caffeinated beverage daily, and nearly one-third (31%) consume two or more such drinks each day.
- Overcaffeinated goes hand-in-hand with overtired. Not surprisingly, teens who drink caffeinated beverages get less sleep than those who don't.

Electronics:

- Teens are ignoring sleep experts' advice to "wind down" with relaxing activities in the hour before bedtime, and to keep their bedroom as a sleep haven that is free from distractions.
- Watching television is the most popular activity (76%) for adolescents in the hour before bedtime, while other popular activities include surfing the internet/instant-messaging (44%) and talking on the phone (40%).
- Nearly all adolescents (97%) have at least one electronic item – such as a TV, computer, phone or music device – in their bedroom. On average, 6th-graders have more than two of these items in their bedroom, while 12th-graders have about four. Adolescents with four or more such items in their bedrooms are almost twice as likely to fall asleep in school and while doing homework.

Parents play a key role in helping their teen get a good night's sleep.

- A good first step for parents is to ask their adolescent about their sleep, and listen to any complaints about sleep and/or sleepiness. If complaints persist, discuss your concerns with your family's doctor or other healthcare provider.

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- Parents should try to get enough sleep themselves for their own health, safety and well being and so that their adolescent has good role models who make sleep a priority.
- Parents should also recognize these red flags that can indicate their child isn't getting enough sleep:
 - Do they have to wake the child for school, and is it difficult to do so?
 - Is the child sleeping two hours later or more on weekends than on school nights?
 - Has a teacher mentioned that the child is sleepy/tired during the day?
 - Does the child rely on caffeinated beverage in the morning to wake up...or have two or more caffeinated beverages during the day to stay awake?
 - Does he/she nap for more than 45 minutes regularly?
- To prioritize sleep for all family members, including adolescents, the National Sleep Foundation offers these tips:
 - Set a regular bedtime and wake-up schedule (even on the weekends) so that an adolescent can achieve 9 or more hours of sleep every night
 - Encourage a relaxing bedtime routine, such as reading for fun or taking a warm bath or shower
 - Keep the bedroom comfortable -- dark, cool, and quiet
 - Remove TVs, computers and other distractions from the bedroom, and set limits on usage before bedtime
 - Avoid all caffeine after lunchtime

More information about NSF's 2006 *Sleep In America* Poll, and other sleep related issues can be found at www.sleepfoundation.org.

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