

Need kids to sleep more during the school year? Start with parents' sleep habits

August 19 2016, by Amy Patterson Neubert

Children are missing out on sleep, and to change that, parents should consider adjusting their personal schedules as well, says a Purdue University expert.

"The transition from summer to school schedules is not any easier for parents, and to really encourage [children](#) to get more sleep, parents need to lead by example," says Blake Jones, an assistant professor of [human development](#) and family studies. "It's not only about being a good role model, but fatigue also affects your parenting. Many families struggle to get enough sleep, and often when children struggle with sleep it tends to push parents' bedtimes back later as well. But for parents who are working to help their children get more sleep, it's also a good time to help improve their own sleep as well."

Jones, who studies child health and sleep routines, also says to be consistent with bedtime hours through the week. Older children and teens often want to catch up on sleep during the weekends, but that can affect their routines and they will be exhausted during the week, he says.

"Sleep during high school is especially tough because teenagers are naturally programmed to stay up late as their bodies shift circadian rhythms to wanting to go to bed later and wake up later, but high school classes often begin very early. So the challenge is that they are following their body signals telling them to stay up late, but they still have to deal with reality of making it to school on time the next morning," Jones says. "And, be patient with these teenagers. It can take them weeks to

transition from their summer sleep schedules back to the school routine."

Jones says teenagers who are not getting enough sleep often have problems focusing and their memory is not as strong. Even though they are older, the lack of sleep can affect brain development and hormone issues, and can also raise their risk for obesity.

"Sleepiness is a big issue for teens, and it can be dangerous as some of these students are up late working part-time jobs, or maybe drowsy on the road, which is particularly dangerous for young and inexperienced drivers," Jones says. "During class it may appear they are bored, but really they are just dragging."

Jones recommends following age appropriate recommendations from the National Sleep Foundation, which were updated in 2015.

- Ages 3-5, 10 to 13 hours.
- Ages 6-13, nine to 11 hours.
- Ages 14-17, eight to 10 hours.

And every age needs to follow a bedtime routine that emphasizes structure and consistency.

"This is also very important with middle school children who are starting to feel more independent," Jones says. "They may want to stay up late because they are older or because they have their own phones to text friends or have more freedom on their tablets. But, research shows that using electronic devices before bed can make falling asleep difficult or affect a person's quality of [sleep](#)."

Provided by Purdue University

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