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Use school vacation to help teens establish better sleep habits.

Left to their own devices, teens will usually put off going to sleep at night for as long as possible. Not a great strategy for remaining alert the following day. It may drive parents crazy, but the kids really can't help it. During puberty, teens' circadian rhythms shift — a phenomenon known as the “sleep phase delay”—putting off their sleep onset time by about two hours. Staying awake for a couple of extra hours wouldn't be such a big deal if school started at 10 a.m. But that's not the case. So between homework and after-school activities, it can be very challenging for teens to get the nine hours of sleep experts say they need. Since teens also see sleep as something that prevents them from doing what they really want to do, like socialize, it's up to parents to help them understand just how important sleep is. During the holidays, when the pressures of school and other activities are generally lighter, talk with your teens about getting some shut-eye. Some good topics to discuss include:

- Establishing a calming routine before bed.
- Having a “no electronics” rule for at least 30 minutes before bed (good for grown-ups too!).
- Avoiding any food or drink with caffeine after 4 p.m. (or earlier for those who are more sensitive to caffeine).
- Encouraging daily exercise.

On the weekends and during school vacation, let teens sleep in, but remind them that it's better to stay in bed for just an hour or two later than their normal wake time. Sleeping much longer will disrupt the body clock, making it difficult to get back to a normal schedule when vacation ends.

By: Cleveland Clinic Wellness Editors





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Moving Teens Away From Heavy Facebook Use

Teens find Facebook so alluring because it's peer-driven — they get to choose their friends, be in constant contact with them and exercise their freedom of speech. But all Internet/video game/TV/computer time should be monitored, with loving limits in place. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than two hours of total screen time (not counting homework) a day, or 14 hours per week. The more screen time allowed, the more you increase the odds of negative behavior and outcomes in a child/adolescent, including violent and aggressive behavior, obesity, poor body concept and self-image, substance abuse, and early sexual activity.

All that screen time isn't doing her brain growth any good either: When the computer is on and the quality of what's she's engaged in is low (social networking sites vs. learning games, for instance), brain development is limited, and so is physical activity. In two studies so far, inner-city kids given laptops/computer access as a means of intellectual stimulation actually scored lower on standardized testing, since they spent time on recreational games rather than on reading or learning games.

I am also an advocate of having kids earn their screen time. If you adopt this approach, let your daughter know that she must do some form of physical activity prior to logging on. This will act as a built-in motivator for her to move (while also automatically cutting back on the hours she spends on Facebook) and assure you that she's getting the exercise that's so important to her overall health and development. Or maybe she's already active, but a reticent reader: Challenge her to earn that screen time by putting in some reading first. When she goes above and beyond the normal expectations, reward her on the weekend with an extra hour or two of screen time.

While it's essential to limit her screen time, parents also play a key role in protecting their children online. So as well as possible, monitor what your teen sees (start by “friending” her on Facebook) and offer her advice on how she can protect herself when she's using social media. Talk about the role of Facebook as a permanent Internet “tattoo.” Make sure she realizes that anything she posts on Facebook, or another medium, is findable forever. That funny picture she uploaded of herself pretending to smoke a cigarette? Is that what she wants her college admissions counselor, future boyfriend or Grandma to see? The challenge with this one is the lack of abstract thought in the average early to middle adolescent. The ability to foresee consequences does not come until late adolescence, if at all. You may need to use examples that hit closer to home, such as the girl whose boyfriend enticed her to take a compromising picture of herself and text it — and it's now on Facebook for the whole school to see, traceable directly to this girl. Does she want that kind of permanent commentary aimed at her? Helping her set limits for herself and see the potential outcomes for poor choices is a valuable and powerful lesson for her to learn sooner rather than too late.

By: Ellen S. Rome, M.D., M.P.H.





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Healthy Recipe



BREAKFAST BURRITO

This is what our team likes to call a “triple threat.” The eggs, veggies and whole wheat are a great combination for a hearty breakfast, one that’s low in fat and high on flavor. A breakfast that is high in protein is important because it will make you feel full for longer, giving you the highest octane fuel so you won’t get hungry.

This dish, created by Dr. Michael Roizen, is 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans friendly; the eggs are a great source of lean protein, the lycopene in tomatoes reduces the risk of prostate cancer for men, and the cilantro is a great way to add flavor without extra salt. Now that’s a breakfast we can stand behind!

Yield: 4 Servings

Ingredients:

- 16 ounces chili beans in spicy sauce, undrained
- 1 cup frozen whole kernel corn
- ¼ cup salsa, preferably chipotle
- 3 large egg whites
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tablespoon fat-free sour cream
- Cooking spray
- 4 large (10 inch) whole-wheat flour tortillas
- ¼ cup cilantro, chopped

Instructions:

In a medium saucepan, combine beans, corn, and salsa. Bring to a boil over high heat; reduce heat and simmer uncovered 5 minutes.

Beat together egg whites, eggs, and sour cream. Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Coat with cooking spray. Add egg mixture; cook, stirring occasionally, until eggs are set. Break into chunks and stir into bean mixture.

Stack tortillas on a clean kitchen towel. Sprinkle a few drops of water over the top tortilla. Fold tortillas up in the towel; heat in microwave oven until warm, 20 to 30 seconds. (Do not overwarm, or the tortillas will be tough.) Place tortillas on serving plates.

Divide egg mixture over tortillas; top with cilantro. Fold sides of tortillas over filling; roll up, burrito fashion

Nutrition Info Per Serving:

320 calories, 6 g total fat, 1 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 95 mg cholesterol, 460 mg sodium, 47 g total carbohydrate, 7 g dietary fiber, 5 g sugars, 17 g protein

By: *Cleveland Clinic Wellness Editors*

How to help your kids bring home better report cards? Get them moving. Regular exercise boosts thinking skills.

Here’s a clever way to help your kids do well in school: Make sure they’re getting plenty of exercise. When overweight, sedentary children were encouraged to get active through running games, Hula-Hooping and jumping rope, their brains showed more activity too. The study, published in the *Journal of Health Psychology*, found that physical pursuits increase children’s ability to think, plan and do math. The more kids exercised, the higher their test scores were. High-tech neuroimaging showed changes in the regions of the brain associated with self-control, reasoning and abstract thought. Though the study was performed on overweight kids, the researchers believe that exercise would have similar effects on sedentary, normal-weight children as well. To help your children succeed academically, you don’t have to make them join the track team. Rather, encourage active playtime, and organize family time around physical activity.



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