

wellness

SLEEP

Getting Enough ZZZs?

Sleeping through first and fifth periods means you only need six hours more at night, right? If only.

Besides what you miss during class when you doze off, you're missing the value of continuous sleep. Because your body goes through different cycles while you sleep, and these each take a certain amount of time, you need a single stretch of time to get the full benefit of sleep, doctors say.

Late Nights Not a Problem

For teens, there's an added challenge when it comes to a good night's sleep: the circadian factor.

During your teen years, your circadian rhythm, an internal clock, is reset. Its ticking keeps you awake later in the evening than it did when you were a young child, and that prompts you to want to sleep later in the day. The challenge for teens is that alarms ring earlier than your body naturally wants to get up for those early morning classes.

Training for Sleep

That makes creating a habit of getting to bed 8-1/2 to nine hours before you need to get up all the more important. Think of it as training, much like you would for sports.

Wind down earlier, eat only a light snack in the evening, and make sure your room is dark and cool. If you have trouble getting to sleep, read a while. Surely one of your textbooks will help you nod off!

Despite the temptation, try to go to bed and get up at the same time on the weekends. It makes the weekday early alarm all the easier to respond to. And bodies love the steady routine.

Too Little Sleep Takes Its Toll

If your night's sleep isn't as long as your body needs, you're shortchanging yourself. Not enough sleep could mean:

- Performing poorly in school
- Nodding off during class
- Giving a sluggish sports performance
- Feeling irritable and out of sorts
- Not being able to pay close attention when you're driving

"Sleeping is no mean art: for its sake one must stay awake all day."

— Friedrich Nietzsche