

Teenagers with Cerebral Palsy need a good night's sleep!

Sleep is essential for good health and well being.

Teenagers need good sleep for:

- growth and development
- general health
- energy for daily activities
- mood and well being
- social and family interaction
- memory and learning
- attention and concentration

Research has shown that as children reach their teens their sleep needs change*.

10 – 13 year olds need about 10 hours
14 – 18 year olds need about 8.5 hours
19 – 30 year olds need about 7.75 hours
*Durand, 1998

Did you know?
Teenagers tend to fall asleep later, and want to sleep in later.....their 'body clock' shifts.

This can make life difficult especially when having to get started early for school or work. Ideas on how to manage this are included over the page.



If you have Cerebral Palsy you may have sleep problems for a variety of reasons

These might include:

- pain and discomfort due to muscle spasm, body position, pressure, temperature/perspiration, uncontrolled movements
- problems with breathing and swallowing or digestion during sleep
- behaviours or habits that interfere with getting to sleep and staying asleep
- medical conditions (such as epilepsy) and medications for these
- difficulty managing your sleep environment such as adjusting lights or music, moving in bed, or adjusting the sheets and blankets

There is help available for your sleep problems.

Everyone is different, but the following might help:

- adjusting your daily / evening routines
- special equipment to help keep you comfortable
- special beds and bedding
- medication
- seeking help from specialists for specific problems (eg speech pathologist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, dietician, orthopaedic surgeon, neurologist, respiratory physician, socialwork, psychologist, nurse, dentist and GP)

The 'Sleep Solutions Team' at The Centre for Cerebral Palsy can help to bring these solutions together.

Sleep Solutions for teenagers with Cerebral Palsy

Routine



A calming routine before bed allows time for you to relax and prepare for sleep. Too much activity in the last hour before bedtime can lead to over stimulation making it hard to fall asleep. Research has shown that intense computer use, heavy exercise and rich food or drink should be avoided in this time. It is important to keep your sleep and wake time consistent each day – including the weekends. Sleeping in on Saturday and Sunday to try to 'make up' lost sleep time adjusts your body clock – making it even harder to fall asleep at a reasonable time during the week. Think about what time you need to be up in the mornings and use the table over the page to calculate your ideal time to go to sleep.

Food & Drink



A healthy diet full of fresh fruit, vegetables, complex carbohydrates and protein will assist with your ability to fall asleep and stay asleep. Caffeine in food and drinks should be avoided from midday onwards. Some teens with cerebral palsy have difficulty with eating and drinking – you may be thirsty or hungry or have problems with digestion – all of which can impact on sleep. You may want to talk to your GP or therapy team about this.

Sunlight Exposure



Time spent outside with exposure to sunlight is essential to regulating the internal body clock and therefore assisting with sleep. If you are having problems falling asleep at night and then sleeping in too long in the morning, regular sunlight at the start of each day may help. Simply being outdoors for a while each morning can make a difference.

Physical Exercise



Moderate intensity physical exercise each day will help you sleep at night time. Exercise should be avoided late in the evening as this may extend the time it takes for you to fall asleep.

Postural Management



Pain, pressure, posture, surgery and muscle spasm can all impact on your ability to sleep. Solutions may include supporting your body with night time positioning equipment, using specialist beds and bedding, trialing medications, and referral to medical specialists.

Bedroom Environment



Look at your bedroom and bedding. Think about ways to make your bedroom an inviting place to sleep. Consider temperature, comfort, light and noise. Ask your therapy team if you would like to investigate special switches and controls that would make it easier for you to manage your environment. If you are having trouble sleeping don't use televisions, mobile phones and computers in your bedroom.

General Health



Allergies, colds, and other general health conditions along with their medications may all play a role in your ability to get to sleep and stay asleep. These need to be addressed individually. Talk to your GP or specialist about these issues.

Stress



School and work deadlines can play on your mind and make it difficult to fall asleep. Have a pen and paper next to your bed to write down any ideas that you are thinking about rather than trying to remember them until morning. Look at learning a relaxation or meditation technique so that you are not taking your worries to bed! Talk to your therapy team about this.