

Teens Need Sleep for Peak Performance

Some adolescents and teens view sleep as a nuisance, a necessary evil that separates one day of activities from another. The goal for some is to see how little sleep you can get away with.

That is a bad idea, according to The National Sleep Foundation (NSF) which calls sleep "food for the brain." "Even mild sleepiness can hurt your performance—from taking school exams to playing sports or video games," according to the foundation.

"Sleep is just as important for teens as it is for young children," said Tori Sheahan, MN, ARNP, CPNP, nurse practitioner at the Student Health Center at Glenridge Middle School. "As kids go through puberty, their sleep needs increase and their biological clocks shift towards a 'stay up late, sleep late' routine," she said, adding this shift is a physiological reality, not just the result of a stereotypical teenage attitude.

Ideally, adolescents should get between 8.5 to 9.75 hours, but this doesn't often happen. In fact, the NSF report, "Adolescent Sleep Needs and Patterns," states only 15 percent of adolescents report sleeping at least 8.5 hours on school nights, and 26 percent typically get 6.5 hours or less.

What students may not realize is that sleep is the time the body goes through muscle repair, memory consolidation and the release of hormones regulating growth and appetite. Without enough time for

this nightly internal tune-up, students are less prepared to concentrate, make decisions and perform well in school, according to the NSF.

More specifically, the foundation says sleep deprivation affects a student's ability to focus. It also affects verbal creativity and effective communication, abstract thinking, creative problem-solving and innovation, mental sharpness, decision-making involving the unexpected, and overall mood and motivation.

Lack of sleep also can cause acne, increased appetite especially for unhealthy foods, contribute to illness and spark inappropriate or aggressive behavior.

Here are some sleep tips offered by the foundation:

- Try to establish a regular bedtime and wake time and don't vary it for more than two consecutive nights.
- Figure out how much sleep you need to enable you to do your best. This means you should feel refreshed—not tired—when you wake up. Most adolescents need 8.5 to 9.75 hours of sleep.
- Move into bright light as soon as you can after you wake up—this lets the brain know it is time to wake up.
- Avoid caffeine and nicotine after lunch because they are stimulants.
- Unwind before going to bed. Avoid heavy reading, studying and computer games for the hour before bed.

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- Eliminate all-nighters—they can wreak havoc with sleep patterns and make it tough to be alert the next day.

Mrs. Sheahan offered these additional suggestions.

"Working in enough sleep around the biological time clock, school hours and extra-curricular activities can be a real challenge," she said. "I encourage parents to be flexible when possible. School start times are not negotiable, but sometimes other activities can be started later in the day to allow the teen time for 'catch-up' sleep."

"I also encourage parents and teens to minimize access to activities that would delay sleep onset," she said. "A TV or computer in the bedroom is quite an enticement to a teen who doesn't feel sleepy! Before he or she knows it, several hours have passed watching a movie or being online and they have missed the

opportunity for a reasonable bedtime. Not only does sleep deprivation affect academic performance, it adversely affects driving skills and reaction times. A teen is already at risk for accidents behind the wheel due to their lack of driving experience and developmental status; sleep deprivation is an easily controlled risk factor for driving accidents," she added.

It also is helpful if teens can learn to budget their time, said Mrs. Sheahan. For example, during exams, teens may want to consider cutting back on sports or community service, and before sports season playoffs, they can make sure they are caught up on all school work. Time management may be difficult, but once they learn it, they have this skill for life, she added.

"Sleep," said Mrs. Sheahan, "is vital for growth, immunity, and mental health."

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Looking for more news you can use to keep your kids healthy and help them become better students? Visit www.healthykidstoday.org, a website created by the Winter Park Health Foundation.

The site is updated weekly with news, tips and recipes. It features timely stories on topics like nutrition, the importance of physical activity and how to help kids cope with life issues. It also includes information on the Healthy School Teams, School Nurses and CHILL Counselors in your child's school.

The Winter Park Health Foundation believes "Healthy Kids Make Better Students" and provides financial support for the Coordinated Youth Initiative and its health and wellness services including the CHILL counseling program, School Nurses, Nurse Practitioners/Student Health Centers at Glenridge Middle & Winter Park High schools and Healthy School Teams. For more information on the foundation, go to www.wphf.org.

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Middle and High School Edition

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Healthy Kids Today is published by the Winter Park Health Foundation especially for students and families affiliated with schools in the Winter Park Consortium of Schools—Aloma, Audubon Park, Brookshire, Cheney, Dommerich, Hungerford, Killarney, Lake Sybella and Lakemont elementary schools; Glenridge and Maitland Middle schools; Winter Park 9th Grade Center; Winter Park High School and Winter Park Tech.



Curbing the Common Cold

It can start with a scratchy throat or a series of unexpected sneezes. These early signs of a common cold can mean the beginning of a miserable one- to two-week illness.

This time of year the cold—responsible for 22 million lost school days a year—is quite common. It is important for parents and kids to know the best way to avoid one, and the best way to treat symptoms if they can't.

It may be all the more essential to try to avoid colds right now. Florida Comprehensive Assessment Tests

(FCAT) are just around the corner, and healthy kids are more likely to perform better than sick ones.

It is important for parents to know the differences between treating a cold and treating bacterial infections, according to Michelle Cash, MSN, ARNP, CPNP, nurse practitioner at the Student Health Center at Glenridge Middle School.

With colds, which are caused by viruses, parents will be treating the symptoms, Mrs. Cash said. For

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Hand Washing How-tos

Your mom always told you it was important to wash your hands, and she was right.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it is the most important thing you can do to avoid illness because it kills germs picked up from other people, contaminated surfaces, or from animals and animal waste.

When should you wash?

The CDC says these times are especially important:

- Before, during, and after you prepare food
- Before you eat, and after you use the bathroom
- After handling animals or animal waste
- When your hands are dirty, and
- More frequently when someone in your home is sick.

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example, parents could get a non-prescription decongestant for a child's stuffy nose or an antihistamine for a runny nose and watery eyes. These are available without a prescription.

Antibiotics are NOT going to help a cold unless it develops into an infection such as in the ear or sinuses, she said. And because Central Florida is an area where germs have become highly resistant to antibiotics, it is a good idea to use antibiotics only when necessary, she added.

In addition to treating symptoms of a cold, Mrs. Cash said it is important for parents and children with colds to get

a lot of rest and drink a lot of fluids. And if there is a fever, the child should stay home. Mrs. Cash recommends not sending a child to school if he or she has had a fever (>101) within the previous 24 hours.

To prevent a cold, hand washing with soap and water or with an antibacterial gel is key. (See the adjacent story on hand washing.)

In addition, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, recommends people keep hands away from the eyes and nose where cold germs on hands can easily enter the body. And it recommends people who sneeze or cough cover their noses or mouths to prevent the spread of germs.

Parents who are in doubt about whether to send a child to school or if a trip to the doctor is called for can contact the nurse at the child's school. Parents also can call the Student Health Center at Glenridge Middle School—407-623-1415 ext. 256--and speak to one of the nurse practitioners. (Parents of students at Winter Park High School who want to speak to a nurse practitioner should call the Student Health Center at Winter Park High School—407-622-3200.)

For more information about the school nursing program and the Student Health Centers at Glenridge Middle and Winter Park High schools go to www.healthykidstoday.org

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What is the best way to wash your hands?
Here is advice from the CDC:

- First wet your hands and apply liquid or clean bar soap. Place the bar soap on a rack and allow it to drain.
- Next rub your hands vigorously together and scrub all surfaces, including under the fingernails.
- Continue for 10 - 15 seconds or about the length of a little tune. It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs.
- Rinse well and dry your hands. The more often you wash, the better.

Perfectionism Too Much of a Good Thing

The bright red "B" on the student's paper just had to be a mistake.

The local high school student only got "A"s. She only knew how to get "A"s. In fact, she was only allowed by her parents to get "A"s, or at least that was what she thought.

So she sought out her teacher and told her she knew there had been a mistake.

It came as a shock when the teacher assured her the paper merited a "B," nothing more, nothing less, but still a fine grade. To the student, however, that didn't matter.

To perfectionist students, anything less than a top notch grade or performance is not acceptable. And when they fail to live up to often unrealistic expectations of success, they can feel like failures, and batter themselves mentally and emotionally.

This need for perfection is something teachers and counselors see in all age and income groups, according to Joanna Eckhardt, Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Coordinator of the CHILL program. (CHILL--Community Help & Intervention in Life's Lessons--counselors provide free counseling for students of all ages in the public schools serving Winter Park and neighboring communities who need help with issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, divorce, grief and loss, low self-esteem, anger management and depression. CHILL counselors

help families, as well as students, to promote healing throughout the family system.)

Perfectionism is present throughout the year, but it can intensify during stressful times, such as the approach of major tests like the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

In some cases, the drive for perfection seems to be inborn, in others, it may be the result of parents placing high demands on children. In still other cases,

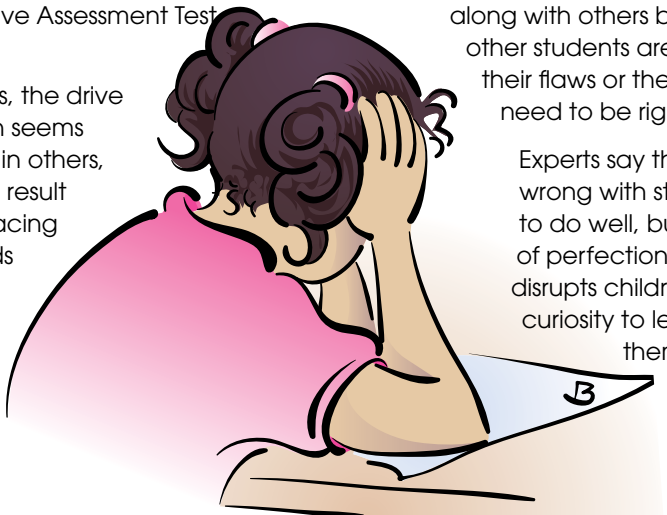
a child may have perfectionist tendencies, and these are exacerbated by parents.

And children aren't always perfectionists in all areas. For example, it may only show up when it comes to school work or appearance or sports.

Signs of perfectionism can show up in a variety of ways. These students may procrastinate and put off work because they feel they can't do the task perfectly. In addition, students may be overly thorough, continuously rechecking, erasing and redoing work, according to Mrs. Eckhardt.

They also may have trouble getting along with others because they think other students are going to see their flaws or they feel like they need to be right all the time.

Experts say there is nothing wrong with students wanting to do well, but the danger of perfectionism is that "it disrupts children's natural curiosity to learn and robs them of the joy they



used to feel in the presence of a new discovery, inquiry or intervention," says Joan Franklin Smutny in her article "Preventing Perfectionism in Children" in the National PTA magazine called "Our Children."

She says perfectionist children tend to avoid trying new things for fear of failure and they procrastinate and leave work unfinished out of fear it won't be good enough. They often focus on mistakes rather than on what they did well, set unrealistic goals and condemn themselves when they don't achieve them. They also have trouble accepting criticism, find it hard to laugh at themselves and focus on end products rather than on the process of learning.

Perfectionists don't often seek help, because they don't like to admit that they have problems, according to Mrs. Eckhardt.

And parents often are not tuned in unless the behavior is pointed out to them.

But parents can be on the lookout for signs that things are getting out of control.

Parents may want to start asking questions if they see their children wanting to avoid school and having headaches or trouble sleeping or if they are obsessively studying, according to CHILL counselors.

CHILL counselors offered a variety of suggestions for parents who want to help their children cope with perfectionism.

It is helpful for parents to model positive behavior when it comes to handling their own mistakes, said Heather Galvin, Licensed Clinical Social Worker and CHILL counselor for Maitland Middle School. It is important not to overact. And it is a good idea not to repeatedly bring up mistakes, whether they are your own or your spouse's because children model the behavior they see at home.

And when it comes to grades, it is helpful if parents can focus on what was learned from an assignment and whether the student was prepared, rather than just focusing on the grade, said Michelle Johnson, Licensed Clinical Social Worker and CHILL counselor at Audubon Park Elementary School.

Other suggestions:

- Praise children for non-competitive things, such as helping others or being part of a team
- Encourage positive self talk when children get down on themselves. They can repeat to themselves

things like "everyone makes mistakes," "no one is perfect," or "I did my best"

- Make sure children know they are valued as people and not just for what they do
- Help kids understand mistakes are a normal part of learning
- Help children plan for challenges and applaud them when they take risks
- Encourage children to read about the lives of great achievers who faced challenges and had failures along the way
- Celebrate a sense of humor

Instead of pressing for perfection, it is a good idea for parents to teach their children to do their personal best, said Ms. Johnson.

For help on this and other mental health issues, contact the CHILL counselor at your school. For more information on the CHILL program, founded and supported through the Winter Park Health Foundation, go to www.healthykidstoday.org

FCAT Testing Tips

In addition to making sure their children get enough sleep and exercise, parents can do many things to help them get ready for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

Here are a few tips--based on the latest in brain research--designed to set the stage for a successful test-taking experience (suggested by Jenny Stokes, counselor at Glenridge Middle School and Jana Ricci, Healthy School Teams coordinator for the Winter Park Consortium of Schools).

- Eat healthfully. The brain, like the body, needs good nutrition for peak performance. Foods that are especially good for the brain include water, cottage cheese, fresh fruit, eggs, fish, oatmeal, chicken, turkey, leafy green vegetables, bananas, apples, complex carbohydrates such as oatmeal and brown rice, and proteins.
- It is especially important to eat breakfast. But stay clear of simple carbohydrates such as sugar,

sodas, cookies, candy, breads and sugared cereal. These carbohydrates make the test taker sleepy. Good options include fruit, oatmeal, toast, eggs and yogurt. Think protein. Local schools are promoting smoothies as good breakfast and snack alternatives.

- Think positive thoughts, they create good brain chemistry. When you are stressed, angry and frustrated, your body produces a chemical called cortisol, which blocks thinking. Successful test taking requires happy, positive thinking. It is important for the student to be his or her own cheerleader.
- Listen to classical music. Classical music organizes the brain for focus, clarity, creativity, emotional well-being and the ability to learn and recall.
- Tune up the brain with exercises such as rubbing the eye points in the back of your head when you feel sleepy. These points can be found on the same level as the top of your ears on the back of your head.
- Stimulate the brain with peppermints, lemon and cinnamon.

- Yellow is a good color for waking the brain. Students may want to wear yellow the day of the test.
- If a student is trying to recall something, suggest he or she look up and to the left. According to brain research, this action helps the brain access the moment it learned the information and this helps with recall.

If you'd like more ideas and want to learn more about learning, nutrition and the brain go to www.healthykidstoday.org and click on the Health Wise/Brain Smart button.

Deep Breathing Eases Test Stress

School nurses become very popular at FCAT time. Students come in with stomachaches and headaches that often are signs of testing jitters. And too much anxiety can have a negative impact on student performance.

Deep breathing can be an effective antidote.

Here is one exercise, Balloon Breathing, suggested by CHILL counselor Aimee Jennings, Licensed Mental Health Counselor at Brookshire Elementary School.

1. Find a quiet place and close your eyes.
2. Place your hands over your ribs.
3. Think of your belly as a balloon.
4. Take a DEEP BREATH slowly through your nose until the balloon feels full.
5. Hold it. Count slowly to five—1-2-3-4-5.
6. Then breathe out slowly through your mouth.
7. Repeat several times. Each time you will become more and more relaxed.

You can also have your child add a positive word or phrase as he or she exhales, such as "relax," "I can do it," or "I am ready."