Sleep

By the time you reach 80, you will have spent about 28 years asleep. Good sleep is vital for your health, but it can be hard when life is busy. Research shows many young people are not getting enough sleep.

**How Much Sleep do Young People Need?**

Teenagers need less sleep than younger children, but more sleep than adults.

The Australian [24-Hour Movement Guidelines](https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/physical-activity-and-exercise/physical-activity-and-exercise-guidelines-for-all-australians/for-children-and-young-people-5-to-17-years) recommend:

* Children 5-13 years should have 9-11 hours of uninterrupted sleep per night
* Young people aged 14-17 years should have 8-10 hours of uninterrupted sleep per night.

# Why is Sleep Important?

Getting enough sleep is important for physical and mental health. Negative changes to the amount and quality of your sleep can make it difficult to function well during the day.

Here are some important reasons to make sure you get enough sleep:

* Getting enough sleep helps you have the energy to be physically active. Getting enough physical activity helps you sleep.
  + Sleep improves your attention, learning and memory. If you do not get enough sleep, it can be difficult to remember things, concentrate and pay attention. This can affect your learning.
  + Lack of sleep can affect your emotions. You may have mood swings, irritability, or feelings of depression.
* Sleep plays an important role in regulating your appetite. Not getting enough sleep can disrupt the hormones regulating appetite. This can make you feel extra hungry. You may seek out high energy foods. This can make it harder for you to recognise when you are full.
  + Sleepy or tired people have an increased risk of injury. This is due to clumsiness, inattention and poor decision making. Did you know driving tired can be as risky as driving after drinking alcohol?
  + Getting enough sleep can help keep your immune system strong.
* A lack of sleep can increase the hormone cortisol. This can increase the risk of heart disease, heart attacks and strokes in adulthood. Good sleep habits will benefit your heart health for life.

# Changes to Sleep Patterns

Changes to sleep patterns are common for young people. This can make it difficult to get the recommended 8 - 10 hours. Adolescents often start going to bed later but must still get up early for school or sport. Young people get more say in their bedtime. They may also have homework, work and social priorities keeping them up late. These routine changes are a normal part of growing up, but there are also physical causes.

The body clock (circadian rhythm) guides the sleep–wake cycle telling you when it's time to sleep and when it's time to wake up. Changes to the body clock mean many young people do not feel sleepy until later in the evening. Your body clock can then be out of sync with your daytime responsibilities.

**Tips for Getting Enough Sleep**

There's not much we can do about biological changes, but there are things you can do to help you feel sleepy in time to get your 8-10 hours’ sleep. Here are some healthy sleep habits:

* Go to bed and get up at the same time.
* Have a relaxing bedtime routine.
* Avoid screen time at least 1 hour before sleep
* Keep screens out of the bedroom.

# Can You Sleep Too Much?

Yes, you can sleep too much. Oversleeping can disrupt your internal body clock just like not getting enough sleep does.

If you do want to stay up or need a sleep-in, try to limit it to within two hours of your usual bed time or wake time.

# Sleep Problems

Common sleep problems include insomnia, snoring, and sleep apnoea (a breathing abnormality). Sleep problems can and do affect your health and safety. If you feel you are not sleeping well, see your doctor for advice.