



## SLEEPING TIPS FOR THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC FROM A RAINBOW SLEEP EXPERT

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*What can you do as the parent of a child or a teen to support healthy sleep during this time when families are home together? While there are a lot of professionals making general recommendations about sleep, these may not be based upon the science of sleep and may not be best for your child or teen.*

### **EXCEPT FOR VERY YOUNG CHILDREN, ESTABLISHING A SLEEP SCHEDULE DURING THIS TIME SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH YOUR CHILD OR TEEN**

This is not the time for conflict about sleep.

- Many children and teens are feeling relief that they have more flexibility with regard to their bedtimes and wake times now.
- Not having to get up very early for school during the week can be beneficial for those with later sleep cycles.

### **WHEN NEGOTIATING THEIR SLEEP SCHEDULE, FIRST FIGURE OUT HOW MUCH SLEEP YOUR CHILD OR TEEN ACTUALLY NEEDS**

How much sleep your child/teen actually needs to function well should be based upon your observations of them and what they tell you rather than on national guidelines or others' opinions.

- Guidelines for sleep duration for different ages of children usually reflect what the "average" child or teen sleeps, but there is a large range.
- Some children and teens need more sleep than this average, while others need less.
- Figure out based on observing your child/teen and talking with them about how they are feeling to come up with what works best for them.
- If your child or teen wants to take naps during the day or falls asleep easily during down times (such as when watching a movie), nighttime sleep may not be adequate.
- While generally naps are not encouraged when children are older (past preschool age), allow some flexibility for naps as long as the child's nighttime behaviors are not disruptive to the household. If there are multiple, long wake ups in the middle of the night, naps should be minimized or discontinued.

## **NEXT, TAKE INTO ACCOUNT YOUR CHILD'S NATURAL SLEEP CYCLE**

There are larks (early-to-bed, early-to-rise) and there are owls (late-to-bed, late-to-rise) including teens who often have a later sleep cycle, and therefore keeping a "regular school schedule" may not be recommended for every child or teen.

- For the "lark" – if your child or teen can easily fall asleep within 20-30 minutes and get enough sleep when waking up at a regular school time, then it might work well to keep the regular schedule.
- For the "owl" – many children function better if allowed to fall asleep when they are sleepy in the evening and wake up naturally in the morning.
- Most teens have a regular sleep cycle (or circadian rhythm) of 1-9 a.m. and so a normal school day sleep schedule doesn't fit with their natural biological rhythm.

## **FINALLY, WHILE THERE MAY BE LEEWAY FOR BEDTIMES AND WAKE TIMES, A REGULAR SCHEDULE FOR SLEEPING IS VERY IMPORTANT**

There is a lot of research on sleep regularity that shows that keeping a regular sleep cycle is best for children and adults.

- Most importantly, consider keeping the wake time within a 2-hour range or less regardless of the day of the week.
- This means that if your teen gets up at 9 a.m. during the week, it's best to wake up by 11 a.m. (or earlier) on the weekends.
- It's an even healthier option to figure out a regular time for waking up and keep this consistent.

## **MOST IMPORTANTLY, REALIZE THAT ALL FAMILY MEMBERS MAY HAVE DIFFERENT NATURAL SLEEP CYCLES AND NEED FOR SLEEP**

Now is the time for being considerate of others.

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