

KidsHealth® KidsPoll: Teacher's Guide Sleep and Your Students

Kids need plenty of sleep to rest their growing bodies and minds, especially as they head into the teen years. When kids don't get enough sleep, it can zap their moods, their school performance, and the amount of energy they have.

So how much sleep *do* kids need? In general, kids who are ages 9 to 12 need about 10 to 11 hours of sleep each night. Kids 13 and older need a little more than 9 hours a night.

But it's not just about the number of hours.

The Puberty Connection

When kids go through puberty, their internal sleep-wake clock is affected. This means that they are biologically programmed to stay up later, which can make catching that early-morning school bus even more challenging. Young teens typically won't be tired enough to fall asleep until around 11 p.m. If the school bus leaves the corner at 6:45 a.m. - well, there's just no way to get more than 7 hours' sleep per night.

Effects of Sleep Deprivation

Sleep deprivation can cause a few problems for students in the classroom, including:

- irritability
- decreased attentiveness
- decreased short-term memory
- inconsistent performance

What You Can Do

If you find a student dozing in the middle of one of your lessons, don't take it personally. Chances are, it has more to do with your student's own biology than your biology lesson.

If sleepiness in class is an ongoing problem for some of your students, try these tips:

- **Teach the ABCs of ZZZs.** Make sure that students (and their parents) know the importance of getting a good night's sleep. A consistent bedtime and a bedroom that's conducive to sleeping (one that's quiet, comfortable, and free of temptations, like TV or video games) can help.
- **Cut out the caffeine.** If your school has vending machines that sell caffeinated beverages, talk with your principal about replacing sodas with bottled water and other non-caffeinated drinks or about making these machines off-limits in the afternoon hours.

If you're concerned about a student, talk with his or her parents and share these resources with them:

How Much Sleep Is Enough for My Child?

<http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/general/sleep/sleep.html>