

There are several practical hints and tips for parents that may help a young person get a good night's sleep.

- Try to impress on the young person the importance of sleep and the need for at least eight hours' sleep on school nights.
- Encourage regular exercise – 20 minutes three times a week will help.
- Suggest a reduction of caffeine intake (in cola and energy drinks as well as coffee).
- Point out that eating too much or too little close to bedtime – an over full or empty stomach – may prevent sleep onset, or cause discomfort throughout the night.
- Try and get the teenager into a going to bed routine – suggest that doing the same things in the same order before going to sleep can help.
- Avoid using electronic devices (TVs, gaming machines and more importantly, tablets and smartphones) in the hour before bedtime. Blue light emitting from these gadgets stimulates the brain and inhibits melatonin production – the hormone you need to sleep.
- Eliminate electronic devices from the bedroom. If this isn't possible, try to zone areas of the room for work, play and sleep.
- Ensure a good sleep environment – a room that is dark, cool, quiet, safe and comfortable.
- Make sure the young person has a comfortable bed. It may be time to get a new one – and encourage him or her to choose it themselves.
- Don't give the young person hand-me-down beds. A good rule of thumb: if the bed's no longer good for its first user it's not good enough for a young person either.
- Remember, habits learned in adolescence often become lifetime habits – so make sure good sleep habits are learned early.

