

The Importance of Sleep

FOR LEADERS



Do you have a hard time falling asleep at night or staying awake during the day? Do you toss and turn during the night?

You might also notice your 4-H members are having a hard time staying awake during meetings. This could be due to stress, a late bedtime, or a lack of physical activity during the day.¹

We all have an internal body clock known as our circadian rhythm that works closely with the hormones in our body, like cortisol.² When we are stressed, cortisol is released and makes it harder to fall asleep. We can help balance our stress hormones by incorporating physical activity into our routine and even into 4-H meetings.



Why does physical activity help you sleep better?³

- ✓ It helps use up more energy during the day so that you get a better-quality sleep.
- ✓ It improves mood and reduces chances of experiencing symptoms of anxiety.
- ✓ It reduces stress levels and allows you to relax at bedtime.
- ✓ It helps break the cycle of being too tired to be active, but too alert to sleep.



Are you getting good quality sleep?

✓ Check out the factors below to assess if you are:⁴

- Sleeping most of the time you're in bed (at least 85 percent of the total time).
- Falling asleep in 30 minutes or less.
- Waking up no more than once per night.
- Being awake for 20 minutes or less after initially falling asleep.

Improve your sleep hygiene – do's and don'ts on how you can sleep better:⁵

Do:

- Take a screen break before bed.⁶ Try reading a book or having a conversation with a family member or friend instead.
- Exercise for at least 30 minutes during the day.
- Switch it up and try to relax with yoga or tai chi before bed.
- Start a relaxing bedtime routine that includes taking a bath or having a warm drink (without caffeine) or keeping the room dark before bed. By establishing a routine, it will let your body and brain know that it's time to go to sleep.
- Take a walk outside before bed to clear your mind.
- Stick to a sleep schedule, even on the weekend.

Don'ts

- Avoid working out or doing other strenuous activity a few hours before going to bed.
- Avoid spicy food or caffeine before bed.

The Sleep Foundation recommends the following sleep guidelines (number of hours sleep each night⁷)



Children
(6 to 13 years)
9 to 11 hours



Teenagers
(14 to 17 years)
8 to 10 hours



Young adults
(18 to 25 years)
7 to 9 hours



Adults
(26 to 64 years)
7 to 9 hours

For more information, check out the Sleep Better page at
participACTION.com



4-H Canada has partnered with ParticipACTION to develop this resource
participACTION.com



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