**TEENAGERS AND SLEEP**

**Some common causes of sleep difficulties**

Most people need between five to nine hours sleep a night to function.

Often stress and anxiety can lead to sleeping problems. As the stressful situation passes a more regular sleep pattern is likely to return. Irregular sleep patterns can also be related to depression. If you have been feeling down for a couple of weeks and also been unable to sleep it may be advisable to speak to someone such as a local doctor.

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Other things that may lead to sleeping problems include:

* asthma and breathing disorders
* during the third trimester of pregnancy sleep is also usually dramatically reduced
* stimulants in the blood stream like caffeine and nicotine
* some prescribed and over the counter drugs
* some forms of the contraceptive pill
* decongestants and pain and cold relievers
* jet lag

**Some of the effects of sleep difficulties**

Problems getting to sleep, waking early or not being able to sleep throughout the night can effect your general wellbeing.

Some effects may include:

* decreased concentration levels
* decreased energy levels
* difficulty concentrating
* difficulty remembering things

**Getting to sleep**

Try to set routines and go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning. This helps your body clock get into rhythm and makes sleeping feel more natural. Avoid sleeping during the day, as it makes it harder to fall asleep at night. Process the day's thoughts and feelings and then let go of them. If it helps, write things down or talk about them with someone you trust.

Learning meditation is a very useful tool for stilling the mind and relaxing the body. It can be a very effective way to release tension and de-stress.

Other things you may want to consider are:

* Sleep in a well-ventilated room. It doesn't want to be too hot or cold
* avoid excessive exercise just before going to bed
* drink warm milk or chamomile tea
* avoid eating a heavy meal late in the evening
* Play soft gentle music. The heart actually follows the beat of the music so high-energy dance music revs you up, slower more peaceful music help you unwind.

From Billie Spencer School Youth Health Nurse:

This information is sourced from: [www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au)