

# **Sleep:**

## **The low-hanging fruit in supporting mental health & sobriety**

Stacy Simera, MSSA, LISW-S (ssimera@aol.com)  
Portage County Mental Health and Recovery Board  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Conference – Oct 2022

### **Highlights:**

- Chronic deficient or disrupted sleep is a risk factor for substance use disorders and mental health disorders for persons of all ages.
- Elementary children require 10 to 11 hours of sleep. The average kindergartener gets 30 minutes less sleep than they should each school night, and the average 11 year old gets an hour less sleep each night.
- The most sleep-deprived age group is adolescents. Teens and young adults need 8-10 hours of sleep. The average high school student gets around 6.75 hours of sleep on school nights.
- Adults need 7-9 hours of sleep, but the average adult gets around 6.7 hours of sleep on weeknights.
- Weekend “catch up” is largely ineffective and can create jet-lag effects.

### **Primary Barriers to Sleep:**

- Lack of awareness among the public and professionals on sleep needs and the consequences
- Overscheduling – pushing activities and/or heavy dinner too late, less time to unwind
- Evening stimulation, such as caffeine and electronics
- Circadian disruption, such as early school hours for teens/young adults, and shift work for adults
- Medical disorders, such as sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, and chronic pain
- Mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD

### **Sleep Tips:**

- Prioritize sleep and set aside enough time
- Establish a bedtime routine, including relaxation
- Create a healthy sleep environment: cool, dark, quiet or with white noise
- Use light therapy only in the morning, and be aware that therapy lights can induce manic episodes
- Seek treatment for medical and mental health conditions that interfere with sleep
- Seek CBTi (cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia) for chronic untreatable insomnia

### **Free Publications and Online Resources:**

Plain Language About Shiftwork, NIOSH: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/97-145/default.html>

CBTi Coach: Free app developed by Stanford School of Medicine for the VA National Center for PTSD

American Academy of Sleep Medicine – Sleep Education Resources – [www.sleepeducation.org/healthy-sleep/](http://www.sleepeducation.org/healthy-sleep/)

Centers for Disease Control – [www.cdc.gov/sleep](http://www.cdc.gov/sleep)

Ohio Adolescent Health Partnership – Resources Page - [www.ohioadolescenthealth.org](http://www.ohioadolescenthealth.org)

Start School Later – Research Wiki and Printable Handouts – [www.startschoollater.net](http://www.startschoollater.net)

Treating Sleep Problems of People in Recovery from Substance Use Disorders, SAMHSA, mail or download:  
<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Treating-Sleep-Problems-of-People-in-Recovery-From-Substance-Use-Disorders/SMA14-4859>

# Healthy Sleep = Healthy Kids

How much sleep do we need each day?	
Toddler: 1-3 years old	12 to 14 hours
Preschool: 3-5 years old	11 to 13 hours
Elementary: 5-11 years old	10 to 11 hours
Adolescent: 12-25 years old	8 to 10 hours
Adult: 26 years and older	7 to 9 hours

## What are the effects of deficient sleep?

Insufficient and/or disordered (poorly-timed) sleep has been connected to:

- Anxiety and depression
- Increased suicide risk (suicide risk for teens decreases 11% with each one hour of additional sleep)
- Poorer attention
- Reduced graduation rates
- Poorer academic performance
- Increased drug use
- Riskier sexual activities
- Increased school violence and bullying
- Compromised immune functioning
- Obesity, changes in hormones that regulate appetite, and poorer food choices
- Increased insulin resistance (which increases risk of diabetes)
- Increased pedestrian accidents (by up to 50%)
- Increased car crashes (by up to 70%)
- Increased sports injuries (by up to 68%)

## What can we do to help support healthy sleep?

- ✓ Follow the ABC's of infant sleep: Alone, on their Back, in a safety-approved Crib
- ✓ Set and enforce healthy bedtimes based on how many hours of sleep is needed
- ✓ Limit electronics (screens shining in eyes), exercise, or heavy meals too close to bedtime
- ✓ No caffeine within 6+ hours of bed and read labels - caffeine is in more products than we realize
- ✓ See a doctor for suspected sleep problems, heavy snoring, or falling asleep during the day
- ✓ Ask your school administrators and state lawmakers to set developmentally appropriate bus pick-up and school day start times

## How do school day start times impact sleep?

Puberty creates a later shift in sleep cycle, causing adolescents to stay up later and sleep later. School start times after 8:30 a.m. for adolescents has been endorsed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, National Association of School Nurses, Society of Pediatric Nurses, Society of Behavioral Medicine, National PTA, National Education Association, Ohio Adolescent Health Partnership, Ohio NASW, and other health and education groups.

---

This data sheet was provided by the national non-profit *Start School Later* and can be copied and shared.  
Visit [www.StartSchoolLater.net](http://www.StartSchoolLater.net) for references and for more information.



# Healthy Sleep = Healthy Adults

<b>How much sleep do we need each day?</b>	
Young adults up to age 25	8 to 10 hours
Adults over 25	7 to 9 hours

## What are the effects of deficient sleep?

Chronic sleep loss (getting just one or two hours less sleep each night) has been connected to:

- Anxiety, depression, suicide (over 60 studies have linked poor sleep and suicide)
- Increased substance abuse
- Poorer financial decisions, riskier gambling
- Poorer ethical decisions at work
- Increased car crashes (similar to being legally intoxicated)
- Decreased testosterone among men
- More aggressive forms of breast cancer among women
- Increased obesity, and changes in hormones that regulate appetite
- Poorer food choices (more junk food; fewer fruits and vegetables)
- Increased insulin resistance (which increases risk of diabetes)

## What can I do to help support healthy sleep?

- ✓ No electronics (screens shining in eyes), exercise, or heavy meals too close to bedtime
- ✓ No caffeine at least 6 hours before bedtime
- ✓ Limit alcohol use (alcohol disrupts the sleep cycle)
- ✓ Sleep in a dark, cool environment with minimal noise, and ideally no pets
- ✓ See a doctor for suspected sleep problems, heavy snoring, or falling asleep during the day

## Do older adults need a different amount of sleep?

No. Older adults may, however, naturally fall asleep earlier in the evening and wake earlier in the morning due to a shift in circadian rhythm that occurs after the age of 65. Older adults secrete the sleep hormone melatonin earlier in the evening, and stop secreting melatonin earlier in the morning, compared to middle-age adults. This biological change in older adulthood is the opposite of the later shift in circadian rhythm that occurs during puberty. The puberty-related later shift in sleep cycle is the reason health experts recommend later school start times for adolescents.

## What about working night shift?

Working night shift is necessary in some professions, yet the health risks are well-documented. For persons who work night shift, the US Department of Health and Human Services provides tips in a publication titled: "Plain Language About Shiftwork" – available for free by calling 1-800-356-4674 or visiting the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's website at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/)

---

This data sheet was provided by the national non-profit *Start School Later* and can be copied and shared.

Visit [www.startschoollater.net](http://www.startschoollater.net) for references and for more information.

