

Greeting Falcons,

Happy Wellness Wednesday.

September is National Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month, and our Wellness Wednesday posts this month have explored general awareness information and preventative measures. Today, we continue to address prevention with a look at the importance of sleep.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine has recommended that teenagers aged 13–18 years should sleep 8–10 hours per 24 hours. A [study of close to 5,000 teens](#) found that depression and anxiety symptoms were closely linked with sleep deprivation in teens: Teenagers with depression symptoms got 3.5 hours less sleep on average than the control group. Moreover, sleep deprivation at age 15 increased the likelihood of mental health problems in the ensuing years.

Why do teens **need** sleep? Your bodies and brains are still developing, and sleep provides an essential revitalization of all the bodily systems.

One [study](#) examined how teenagers reacted during the day when they hadn't gotten enough sleep. Sleep-deprived teens found stressful situations much more threatening than the more rested and older study participants.

Furthermore, researchers have found that sleep-deprived teens feel [more depressed](#) and anxious. In a [study](#) of nearly 28,000 high school students, each hour of lost rest was associated with a 38 percent increase in the risk of feeling sad or hopeless, and a 58 percent increase in suicide attempts. Another [study](#) found that high school seniors were three times more likely to have depression symptoms if they had excessive daytime sleepiness.

One more reason why sleep is important for teens is because sleep deprivation can increase their likelihood of using drugs and alcohol. A [study](#) published in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* indicates that the disruption of the natural sleep cycle can significantly increase the risk of substance use, by interfering with [brain functions](#) that regulate the experience of reward, emotions, and impulsivity.

Sleep-deprived teens tend to engage in [risky behaviors](#) because their impulse control is compromised. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse statistics show that high school students who get less than eight hours of sleep per night are significantly more likely to [use alcohol](#), [smoke marijuana](#), and become lifetime users of illegal drugs. One [study](#) found that sleep deprivation is linked to binge drinking, drunk driving, and unprotected sex.

Are you concerned about your lack of sleep yet? Here are some ways for sleep-deprived teens to sleep better and longer.

- Do [physical activity](#) during the day.
- Make time for short naps.
- Set an electronic curfew for yourself when all devices go off.
- Create a bedtime routine that includes relaxing activities, such as [writing in a journal](#) or listening to music.
- Keep the bedroom dark and cool.
- Avoid late-night snacks, which raise and then crash blood sugar, making you less sleepy.

- Practice [yoga and meditation](#), proven to relax the nervous system.

In summary, a good night's sleep will help sleep-deprived teens feel better in mind, body, and spirit.

This week's affirmations:

I embrace rest. I welcome sleep.

Take care and be well,

Ms. McDougall