

# TEENS MATTER

## A PARENTING TEENS DIGEST

Boone County Step Ahead Council

August/September 2004

**Quote: If at first you do succeed, try not to act surprised**

### BACK TO SCHOOL

Well it's that time of year again. Summer is fading fast and the new school year has begun. It seems like school starts earlier and earlier every year. This year some of the schools started at the end of July.

With every new school year comes an excitement of new classes, friends, activities, teachers and maybe even a new school. But summertime activities are hard to give up. Bedtime battles to the misery of morning wake-up calls, summertime sleep habits are hard to change. Late summer nights combined with early school start times and the stress of just being a growing child deprive our children of essential **SLEEP**. Sleep deprivation can influence health, academic performance and behavior. It is an unrecognized epidemic.

A large number of our children, especially teens, are chronically sleep-deprived. One-third of elementary school-age children have some kind of sleep problem and most adolescents and teens are not getting enough sleep. Many will struggle with the new demands, emotions and challenges of a new school year.

It is becoming more apparent how critical a good night's sleep is for brain development and daytime functioning, performance, mood and behavior. Just 20 fewer minutes of needed sleep may significantly affect behavior in many areas. One study found that students with C's, D's and F's got about 25 fewer minutes of sleep and went to bed an average of 40 minutes later than A and B students. Teenage insomnia has been related to anger, depression, difficulty with school adjustments, and stress. Insufficient sleep has been associated with daytime fatigue, inability to concentrate in school, ADHD, a tendency to doze off in class, problematic behaviors, and lower levels of social skills. Studies suggest that insomnia often begins early in life and persists into adulthood. Several studies report that more total sleep, earlier bedtimes, and later weekday rise time are associated with better grades in school.

You may be surprised to learn that up to half of adolescents reported at least occasional difficulty falling or even staying asleep and up to 13% experiencing chronic and severe insomnia. The sleep time for most teenagers is insufficient: the average is under 7 1/2 hours, with only 15% sleeping 8 1/2 hours or more on school nights and more than 25% typically sleeping 6 1/2 hours or less.

#### **Does Your Child Have a Sleep Problem?**

##### **Awareness is Key**

For some of us it may be obvious that our children are not getting enough sleep, but for most it requires some education, investigation and a keen and watchful eye. Sleep deprivation is also difficult to detect because sleep problems often masquerade in different manifestations. Consider: Children rarely complain of sleep problems. A study showed that very few sought help for their sleep, even though some considered their problems to be severe.

Another study found that almost 90% say that they need more sleep, but how many parents have heard their child say, "You know, I think I am going to go to bed early tonight."

Parents may also overestimate the amount of sleep their child gets. We do not know when they actually fall asleep, or how many times a night they awake.

Health issues such as asthma, allergies or body aches may also cause poor nights sleep. Interestingly, poor sleepers were found not to be consistently more tired than good sleepers, and they were actually least tired in the evening, when most good sleepers were tired.

##### **What Can You Do? Think SLEEP!**

Early intervention is important, given the consequences and that children do not "grow out of" sleep problems. The sleep problems of childhood tend to persist into adulthood. With the many disguises of sleep deprivation, it is important that you be aware and "think sleep." Talk with your child. Just taking time to ask some of the right questions make a difference. If there is a problem, discuss it and make plans that are agreeable to all. Include detailed targeted behavior changes and rewards. With the child in school during the day, after-school activities and even part-time jobs, it is

critical to talk with teachers, coaches, bosses, or anyone else who takes

up a good part of your child's time to see if the child is exhibiting any signs of sleep deprivation. This may take some of your time to educate the educators. Teach your child good sleep habits. Establish sleep healthy bedtimes, bedtime routines, habits, and diets. Identify and reduce as much daytime stress as possible. Limit TV and other "screen time: (computers, video games) especially at bedtime. Do not put a TV in your child's bedroom, as it has been shown to negatively affect sleep. As in everything in life, do your best to be consistent and do not be afraid to call your doctor or sleep specialist if you feel you need to. This issue is too important not to.

Based on web site article:

[www.apna-hyderabad.com](http://www.apna-hyderabad.com)



#### THE SEASONS OF INDIANA

Fall and spring are my favorite times of the year. The spring brings new life to mother nature with temperatures that are just right and autumn signals a much-needed rest after the scorching days of summer. I love the crisp cool days, hot chocolate, bright and beautiful full harvest moons, pumpkins, candy corn and apple cider from Stucky's, and of course the Fall Festivals. A lot of the festivals begin in September and continue into October. I've searched for a few of the upcoming dates in our area and a couple that are close by. Mark these dates on your calendar!!

#### SEPTEMBER

**Sept. 10,11,12 –Zionsville Fall Festival - Zionsville**

**Sept. 17,18 Back to the Fifties – Lebanon, IN**

**Sept. 17,18 Pioneer Days – Whitestown, IN**

**Sept. 24,25,26 Turning of the Leaves Festival –  
Thorntown, IN**

**Sept. 25,26 New Earth Festival – Atlanta, IN**

#### OCTOBER

**First week-end in October – Harvest Moon  
Festival – Sheridan, IN**

**Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> Covered Bridge Festival  
Parke County, Rockville, IN**

### **A family that eats together....**

The family meal!!! Sitting down and eating together was once just a normal 'part of the day'. Now sitting down as a family for some is reserved for special occasions: Thanksgiving, Christmas or someone's birthday or anniversary. Below is an excerpt from an article written by Kelly Young, Los Angeles Times, 08/16/2004. I know eating together will not cure the problems of the world, but it **may** just help in getting connected with others in the family. "How did your day go?" might be a more important question than you think. So make plans tonight – or tomorrow night – and let everyone know that "we are sitting down and eating together as a family". If eating together every night is impossible, try to sit down together as many evenings a week as possible.

#### **Kelly Young, Los Angeles Times, 06/16/2004 Teens' emotional health linked to dining with parent, siblings.**

A family meal, whether it is loaded with brussels sprouts or carrots, might provide more than just nutrition. It might also improve a teenagers' emotional health.

"The family mealtime could provide kind of an informal check-in time, a little reminder that you're part of a group of people that care about you," said Marla Eisenberg, an epidemiologist at the University of Minnesota and lead author of a study on the effect of dining as a family.

Adolescents who ate five or six meals a week with their families were 7-24% less like to smoke cigarettes or marijuana, drink alcohol, get lower grades, show signs of depression or think about or attempt suicide than teens who had three or four family meals a week, the study found. The more meals the teens ate with families, the less likely they were to have these problems

Previous studies have shown that family meals were associated with how much children felt their parents cared about them. Children who feel close to their parents have a reduced risk of drug use, emotional problems, violence and sexual activity.

In the Twin Cities, a study was conducted in 1998 and 1999 at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. Researchers surveyed 4,746 young people from the ages of 11 to 18 about their families' eating habits, their grades, drug use and mental health. Meals didn't have to be in the evening nor be home-cooked to qualify as family meals. Researchers said that teenagers who spend more time with their families might have fewer opportunities to smoke or drink. Results of the surveys were published in the August issue of the Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine.