

# Tweens & teens

## THE BATTLE:

**They're over-scheduled and skimping on sleep.**

With soccer, debate team, band practice, and dance—not to mention endless homework—it's no wonder tweens and teens are constantly sleep-deprived. Plus, raging hormones and social stresses, like fitting in with friends and dating, can keep teens up at night. "Anxiety trickles into bedtime," says Nalle. "Whatever they were carrying around all day suddenly floods their minds."

## THE FIX: Hack the routine.

Puberty shifts the internal clock toward a later sleep time, says Rashid. So instead of trying to enforce a too-early bedtime, adjust schedules however you can. One mom drives her daughter to school in the morning rather than waking her for the earlier bus, which gives her daughter an extra 45 minutes of sleep. Others find that if their kids do homework during lunch or even before school, it means they get to bed by 11 p.m. rather than 1 a.m. To de-stress after busy days, teens can try showering 30 to 45 minutes before bed, flipping through a magazine, or doing 10 minutes of meditation (the free Headspace app can help) to clear their minds for better sleep.

## THE BATTLE:

**They're staying up late, staring at their screens like zombies.**

The phenomenon of teens staying up all night watching YouTube and Snapping with their friends has been called "vamping," as in acting like a nocturnal vampire. The screens themselves add to the problem: The blue light beaming from phones and tablets "is strong enough to block a good chunk of melatonin, the hormone that makes us sleepy," says Jess P. Shatkin, MD, author of *Born to Be Wild: Why Teens Take Risks, and How We Can Help Keep Them Safe*. Sleep deprivation is particularly dangerous to teens because it blurs their ability to concentrate, which can lead to risky behaviors like drowsy driving or drug and alcohol use, says Mindell. And a 2017 study in the journal *Development Psychology* found that children with TVs or video-game consoles in their rooms did worse in school and weighed more.

## THE FIX: Remove the temptation.

Make it a family rule that everyone's phones and tablets be put to bed—that is, plugged into a communal charging station—on the kitchen counter at least 30 minutes before lights-out, suggests Mindell. To make sure stealthy teens don't hide their laptops under the covers, some parents switch off the household Wi-Fi, making it harder to get online. Alyceson Weinfeld-Reyman, a mom of two in New York City, literally takes matters into her own hands: She takes her 16-year-old son's phone away at 10:30 on weeknights and keeps it in her room so he can't grab it back.

You can also help wean teens off that sleep-stealing screen glare by enabling the "grayscale" function on Androids and Night Shift mode on iPhones (both found under Settings) and adding the f.lux download to computers. All three reduce blue light, so melatonin is allowed to flow, says Shatkin. To help transition from the digital world to the dream world, encourage bedtime rituals (drinking decaf tea, reading) to prep for sleep. "Bedtime routines aren't just for toddlers," says Nalle.



For tips on how to tell a great bedtime story, go to [realsimple.com/story](http://realsimple.com/story).