

Name: _____ Class: _____

Teenagers Who Don't Get Enough Sleep at Higher Risk for Mental Health Problems

By Tori Rodriguez
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The average teenager doesn't get enough sleep, and the consequences might be greater than just nodding off in class. In this informational text, Tori Rodriguez discusses the effect of not getting enough sleep on teenagers' mental health. As you read, take notes on how teens are affected when they don't get enough sleep.

[1] Many studies have examined the effects of sufficient versus insufficient sleep on mental health. A new study, published in February in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, takes a more nuanced¹ look, attempting to determine just how much each hour less per night really costs — where teenagers are concerned.



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The researchers surveyed an ethnically diverse sample of 27,939 suburban high school students in Virginia. Although teenagers need about nine hours of sleep a night on average, according to the National Institutes of Health, only 3 percent of students reported getting that amount, and 20 percent of participants indicated that they got five hours or less. The average amount reported was 6.5 hours every weekday night. After controlling for background variables such as family status and income, the researchers determined that each hour of lost sleep was associated with a 38 percent increase in the odds of feeling sad and hopeless, a 42 percent increase in considering suicide, a 58 percent increase in suicide attempts and a 23 percent increase in substance abuse.

These correlational² findings do not prove that lack of sleep is causing these problems. Certainly the reverse can be true: depression and anxiety can cause insomnia.³ "But the majority of the research evidence supports the causal direction being lack of sleep leading to problems rather than the other way around," says study co-author Adam Winsler, a psychology professor at George Mason University. Sleep deficits⁴ reduce brain function, further disturbing areas in which even well-rested adolescents struggle: executive function⁵, self-control and judgment. "Parents, educators, and therapists need to pay attention to the role of sleep in preventing mental illness among youth," Winsler says. "Its effect is likely larger than most therapies and medications."

1. characterized by slight distinction or variation
2. a relationship or connection between two things based on a pattern of change
3. inability to sleep
4. **Deficit (noun):** a lack or shortage; deficiency
5. the set of mental skills that helps you plan, focus, remember instructions, and perform multiple tasks

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best expresses the central idea of the text?
 - A. Researchers recommend that teenagers get between five and nine hours of sleep a night to protect them from deteriorating mental health.
 - B. Research is showing that lack of sleep probably increases the likelihood of mental health problems in teenagers.
 - C. While getting too little sleep can be damaging to teenagers, it is also not beneficial to get over nine hours of sleep.
 - D. Mental health problems negatively affect teens' sleep patterns, more than lack of sleep contributes to mental health problems.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "A new study, published in February in the Journal of Youth and Adolescence, takes a more nuanced look, attempting to determine just how much each hour less per night really costs" (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "Although teenagers need about nine hours of sleep a night on average, according to the National Institutes of Health, only 3 percent of students reported getting that amount" (Paragraph 2)
 - C. "These correlational findings do not prove that lack of sleep is causing these problems. Certainly the reverse can be true: depression and anxiety can cause insomnia." (Paragraph 3)
 - D. "But the majority of the research evidence supports the causal direction being lack of sleep leading to problems rather than the other way around" (Paragraph 3)

3. PART A: Which statement best describes how the author addresses the conflicting evidence in paragraph 3?
 - A. She acknowledges that some questions remain, even though the link between sleep and mental health is strong.
 - B. She offers an additional explanation for why teenagers struggle to get enough sleep.
 - C. She gives additional proof that the findings of the study are undeniable.
 - D. She dismisses evidence that doesn't fit her conclusion and directly appeals to teenagers to get more sleep.

4. PART B: Which detail from the paragraph 3 best supports the answer to Part A?
- A. "These correlational findings do not prove that lack of sleep is causing these problems."
 - B. "Sleep deficits reduce brain function, further disturbing areas in which even well-rested adolescents struggle"
 - C. "Parents, educators and therapists need to pay attention to the role of sleep in preventing mental illness among youth"
 - D. "Its effect is likely larger than most therapies and medications."

5. How does the text develop the idea that getting less sleep likely has a negative impact on teenagers' mental health?

Discussion Questions

Directions: *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. In the context of the text, how can we achieve greater happiness? How is caring for our body connected to our mental health? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

2. In your opinion, what does it mean to be grown up? Should teens be allowed to make their own decisions about sleep and other personal issues, or should adults set guidelines that help them stay healthy? Is having more freedom of choice worth the potential consequences if a young person makes the wrong decision?