



DEAR STUDENT:

You have school and homework. Sports and clubs. Friends and family. And an after-school job. **Who has time for sleep? Who needs sleep anyway?**

Believe it or not, you do. As a teen, you actually need more sleep than younger kids: about nine hours every night. Like most teens, you probably sleep only about six. You wake up tired, and you stay that way. Do you think that's okay — that you'll be fine, just like everyone else? No way! Here's why: **When you don't get the sleep you need, you start to get drowsy in class, at work, at parties, and behind the wheel of your car.** That's where lack of sleep can really hurt you and others.

The solution is simple—**crash in bed, not on the road.** Go to bed earlier. Take a nap if you're sleepy. Sleep late when you can.

Remember, when you're short on sleep, stay out of the driver's seat.

Sincerely,

Claude Lenfant, M.D.

Director

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TOP 5 REASONS TO GET ENOUGH SLEEP

-  Drowsy drivers can crash their cars. Crashes disfigure, disable, and kill drivers, passengers, or pedestrians.
-  Drowsy teens react more slowly and perform worse in sports than well-rested teens.
-  Drowsy teens do poorly in school and have problems socially.
-  Drowsy teens have trouble making good decisions.
-  Drowsy teens don't look their best.

FEELING SLEEPY? HERE'S WHY!

- Many teens need at least 9 hours of sleep per night. More than younger kids, and more than adults. But most teens get less than 6.5 hours of sleep. If “most teens” is you, you’re probably sleepy most of the time.
- When kids hit puberty, their internal clocks change: that’s why teens just naturally want to go to bed late and sleep late in the morning!
- Teenagers have more responsibilities than younger kids. And, between school, homework, jobs, sports and a social life, it is difficult for them to get enough sleep.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

HOW WOULD YOU HANDLE THESE SITUATIONS?

(For ideas, check out the **YOU SHOULD KNOW** section.)

1 **Brianne** is a 17-year-old junior who lives in the suburbs. She’s a good student, a member of the high school basketball team, and is very socially active. She stayed up late studying for mid-terms, got to school at 7:30 a.m., finished basketball practice at 4:00 p.m., then drove a friend home from practice. Now it’s 6:00 p.m., and she’s heading home on the freeway. After a 20-minute drive, she suddenly realizes she missed the exit to her house and doesn’t remember driving the last few miles.

What could have happened to Brianne while she was on “auto-pilot”?
How could she have avoided this dangerous situation?



2 **Pete** is 18, and thinking about graduation. He works after school at the mall to make money for college. His older brother is at the state university, about two hours from home; and Pete’s planning a weekend road trip starting tonight. After a short night of sleep he goes to school, works for about 4 hours at his job, and grabs a bite to eat. Then, he and his girlfriend, Shelley, jump in the car and head toward the university. It’s already 8:00 p.m.

Shelley falls asleep and after about 30 minutes, Pete realizes that he’s exhausted, too. A few minutes later, he’s startled into alertness as he hits the rumble strips along the shoulder of the highway.

How could Pete have avoided this dangerous situation? What should he do now?

3 Adam is 17, and has just received his license. His parents have given him a strict 11:00 p.m. curfew. It's now 1:30 a.m., and after a long day, he's about to leave a party at a friend's house. Feeling alert, he jumps behind the wheel of the family car with his best friend Chris in the passenger seat. A few minutes later, Chris yells, "Hit the brakes!" just as Adam, with his eyes closed, is about to drift through a red light.

How could Adam have avoided this dangerous situation? What should he do now to get home safely?



Y O U S H O U L D K N O W . . .

1 ...the only way to prevent drowsy driving is to get enough sleep on a regular basis.

2 ...it's possible to build up a big "sleep debt" by sleeping too few hours for too many days on end. You can't "pay off" the sleep debt in just one night—or day. It can take days to get back to normal.

3 ...most sleepiness-related crashes happen between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. (during normal sleeping hours).

4 ...there is only one sure-fire way to wake yourself up when you're sleepy: take a 15-20 minute nap before driving.

5 ...getting a good night's sleep before a long drive can save your life.

6 ...traveling with a friend who's awake can help keep you awake. But, a sleeping friend is no help at all.

7 ...rolling down a window to get some air, stretching your legs, or even cranking up the radio are almost useless when you're trying to stay awake.

8 ...one beer, when someone is sleep-deprived, will hit as hard as two or three beers when one is well rested.

9 ...drinking caffeine (a caffeinated soft drink, coffee, or tea) before hitting the road may help for a short time, but it can also be a problem. Caffeine can make you lose sleep, which leads to more sleepiness!

Some high schools across the country have decided to start classes about one hour later, to allow teenage students to get extra sleep. **Do you think this will make a difference?**

In many families, parents get even less sleep than their kids.

How could you help convince your family members of the importance

of getting more sleep?

Teenagers are under a lot of pressure—preparing for college, playing sports, working after-school jobs, and trying to have a social life.

How can kids lighten their load without losing out on important parts of their lives?

WAKE UP CALL!

RATE YOUR SLEEP HABITS

1. Most nights, I sleep

- (a) under 6 hours.
- (b) 6 to 8 hours.
- (c) 9 or more hours.

2. I blow off sleep to

(Circle any that apply)

- (a) study.
- (b) party.
- (c) work.
- (d) watch TV.
- (e) talk with friends.
- (f) I don't blow off sleep.
- (g) other

3. I drive when I'm sleepy because

- (a) I know I can keep myself awake.
- (b) I don't want to ask for a lift—it's embarrassing.
- (c) I love my car.
- (d) I don't think about sleepiness until I'm actually falling asleep.
- (e) I don't drive when I'm sleepy.

4. When I get sleepy while driving, I

- (a) count on highway rumble strips or passengers to wake me up.
- (b) stop and call for a lift.
- (c) stop for caffeinated soft drinks or coffee.
- (d) stop and take a nap.
- (e) open a window to get some air.
- (f) turn the music up.
- (g) just keep driving.

Score points for your answers as follows:

- 1. (a) 0; (b) 1; (c) 2
- 2. (a) to (e) 0; (f) 1; (g) 0
- 3. (a) to (d) 0; (e) 3
- 4. (a), (e), (f), (g) 0; (c) 2; (b), (d) 3

What your score means:

- 9 points—Wide Awake**
- 6-8 points—Waking Up**
- 4-5 points—Asleep at the Wheel**
- Less than 3 points—Hear the Alarm**