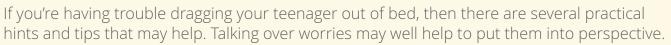# sleep tips for teenagers

There is a great deal of emphasis on teaching teens about healthy eating and exercise but not enough on the importance of a good night's sleep.

Sleep problems can be a very serious issue and lack of sleep has been linked to obesity, depression and impaired learning.

If you're having trouble dragging your teenager out of bed, then there are several practical hints and tips that may help. Talking over worries may well help to put them into perspective.

Z Emphasise the importance of sleep and that improves memory and performance. Teens need at least eight hours' sleep on school nights.

Z Encourage regular exercise – 20 minutes three times a week will help.

Z Suggest they drink less caffeine (in cola and energy drinks as well as tea and coffee). Too much caffeine stops them falling asleep and prevents deep sleep.

Z Point out that eating too much or too little close to bedtime – an over full or empty stomach – may prevent sleep onset, or cause discomfort throughout the night.

Z Try and get your teen into a good bed routine – suggest that doing the same things in the same order before going to sleep can help.

Z Avoid using electronic devices (TVs, gaming machines and more importantly, tablets and smartphones) in the hour before bedtime. Blue light emitting from these gadgets stimulates the brain and inhibits melatonin production – the hormone you need to sleep.

Z Eliminate electronic devices from the bedroom. If this isn't possible, try to zone areas of the room for work, play and sleep.

Z Ensure a good sleep environment – a room that is dark, cool, quiet, safe and comfortable.

Z Make sure your teenager has a comfortable bed. It may be time to get a new one – and encourage him or her to choose it themselves.

Z Don't give teenagers hand-me-down beds. A good rule of thumb: if the bed's no longer good for its first user it's not good enough for them either.

Z Remember, habits learned in adolescence often become lifetime habits – so make sure good sleep habits are learned early.