



healthy kids **NOW**

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How to create a dust-free bedroom

If your child is dust-sensitive, especially if he or she has allergies and/or asthma, you can reduce some of the misery by creating a dust-free bedroom. Routine cleaning will help, but to create a truly dust-free bedroom, you must reduce the number of surfaces on which dust can collect. Here are some steps you can take:

- Keep toys that will accumulate dust out of the child's bedroom.
- Avoid stuffed toys.
- Use only washable toys of wood, rubber, metal, or plastic.
- Store toys in a closed toy box or chest.
- Keep furniture and furnishings to a minimum.
- Avoid upholstered furniture and blinds.
- Use only a wooden or metal chair that you can scrub.
- Use only plain, lightweight curtains on the windows.

Source: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

'Tis the Season for Allergies — and Asthma

If your child has seasonal allergies, Spring is a mixed blessing. If he or she also has asthma, it can mean double trouble!

More than half of all asthma sufferers also have allergies. Things that trigger their allergies can also jump-start the immune system and trigger an asthma attack.

Pollen, dust, and animal dander may come to mind as the most common allergy triggers. But there's another one that actually causes more problems for people with asthma — cockroaches. A recent study found that allergic reactions to these insects are the leading cause of asthma symptoms in children who live in urban areas. Allergies to dust mites and mold were common, too.

Tame Those Triggers

The best way to prevent an allergic asthma attack is to avoid whatever prompts a reaction. Try these tips for dealing with specific allergens:

- **Dust mites.** Cover your child's mattress and pillows with dust-proof cases. Wash his or her sheets and blankets in hot water every week. When cleaning house, dust with a damp — not dry — mop or rag and use a filtered vacuum cleaner.
- **Mold.** Run a dehumidifier in rooms that get damp. Vent your clothes dryer outdoors. Check for water leaks in your home and repair them. Don't put down carpet anywhere it could get wet.



- **Pet dander.** Keep dogs and cats out of your child's bedroom. Vacuum regularly. Make sure your child washes his or her hands after touching a pet.
- **Pollen.** Keep your child indoors in the morning, when pollen levels tend to be highest. Close your windows and use air conditioning, if you can.
- **Cockroaches.** Keep food tightly covered. And take out the trash often. Wash dishes and wipe down the countertops and stove right after a meal. Clean your kitchen floor weekly, at least. To keep cockroaches from getting in, block off small spaces in the cellar, around windows, and in the floor. Above all, if your child has allergic asthma, be sure the child takes his or her asthma medicine. It can help keep allergies — and asthma — under control. (For more on asthma, see page 3.)

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The Seven Best Foods We Never Eat



1

Avocado. The avocado is high in fat, but most of that is the heart-healthy monounsaturated kind. We know the avocado tastes great, but outside of an occasional guacamole dip, few of us reach for this high-fiber food for salads or as a great side dish.

You'll also get protein, a good dose of vitamins A and E, some B vitamins, lots of potassium, and a dollop of copper. The rich and creamy avocado has been called the "chocolate" of fruits.

2

Sweet potato. At Thanksgiving, we dash for sweet potatoes as if they're available just once a year. But you can bake or microwave these tubers anytime for a super dose of vitamin A — five times the daily value (DV) the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) uses for labeling.

Sweet potatoes also offer some vitamin C and a significant helping of important minerals, including calcium, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, and iron. And this fat-free, tasty package brightens the plate.

3

Soybeans. The FDA recently added soy to the list of foods that can make health claims because of its value in reducing the risk of heart disease. Soy is high in protein — one cup of beans can provide 40 percent of the DV for protein — and the bean also serves up generous helpings of fiber, calcium, potassium, iron, phosphorus, and magnesium. How you eat this versatile food is up to you — cooked and mixed in salads or casseroles, roasted for snacks, or as tofu, tempeh, or soy milk. Soy has some fat, but very little saturated fat.

The use of soy products to treat symptoms of menopause is controversial. While it may improve symptoms for some women, the phytoestrogens (plant estrogens) that may help relieve hot flashes may also increase the risk of breast cancer.

4

Dried figs. Tasty as Fig Newton cookies are, figs stand on their own. They are high in fiber, contain ample B vitamins and iron, and are loaded with potassium and calcium. Five figs give you as much calcium as half a glass of milk.

What to do with a fig? Pop a few in your mouth, sneak them into casseroles, or use them in place of raisins in a salad.

5

Lentils. We never think of this legume unless it's in our soup.

6

But put lentils in rice or casseroles and you've added one of the highest-protein, highest-fiber foods around.

A cup of lentils supplies about 40 percent of the DV for protein and about 65 percent of the DV for fiber. The lentil is high in potassium, calcium, and iron, and a good source of B vitamins, phosphorus, and copper. And the fat content? Zero.

7

Kale. Dark, leafy green vegetables are an acquired taste. Maybe now's the time to see if your taste buds have matured to accommodate this no-fat, low-calorie, super-high vitamin-A food.

One cup of kale (boiled, but not overcooked) gives you double the DV for vitamin A. You'll also get some vitamin C, a small amount of B vitamins, and a generous amount of calcium. Look for kale's healthy but ignored cousins — Swiss chard, mustard greens, and collards.

Barley. Here's another soup secret we tend to forget despite its claim to protein, fiber, potassium, phosphorus, and iron. One cup supplies 25 percent of the DV for fiber.

Eat pearled barley as a side dish instead of rice, use it for a hearty casserole, or boil it to create a unique base for a stir-fry meal. And don't overlook the high nutritional content of some other forgotten but powerful grains, like quinoa and amaranth.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Is Your Teen Sleep Deprived?

Teens on average need about nine hours of sleep at night. But most don't get nearly that amount.

Teens who don't get enough sleep have trouble focusing in class and often have lower grades than they are capable of. There is growing evidence linking a chronic lack of sleep in teens with an increased risk of being overweight, developing diabetes or heart disease, and getting infections. Teens who are sleep deprived may fall asleep in class or other inappropriate places. And for teens who are driving, being sleepy can raise the risk of a serious accident.

Signs that your teen needs more sleep:

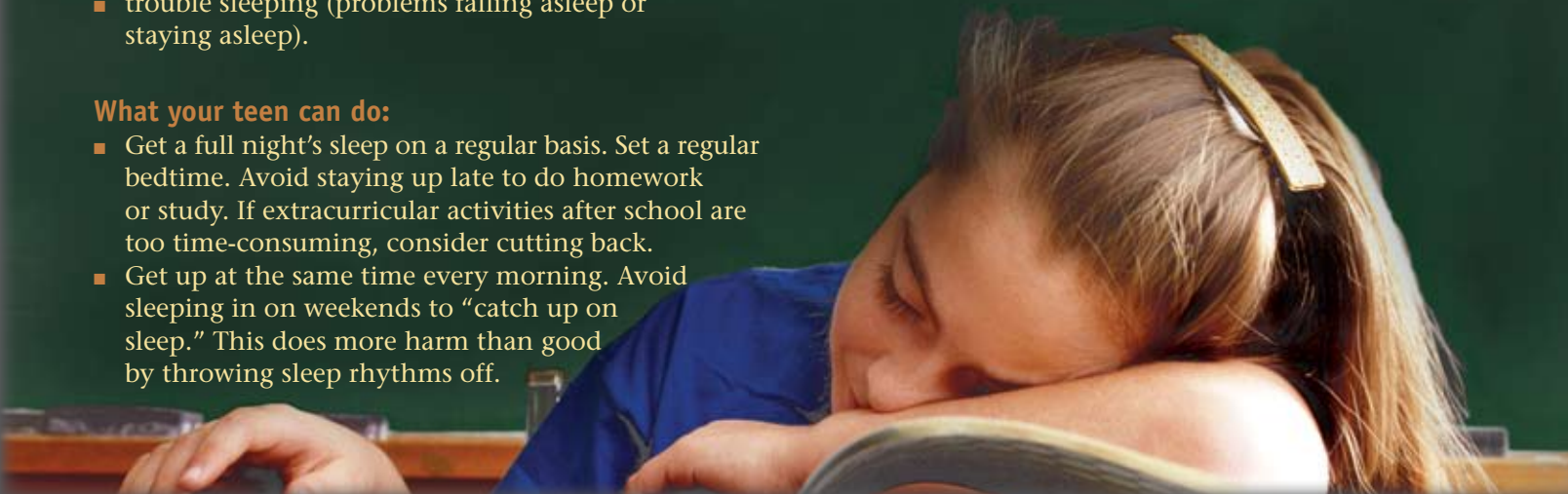
- daytime sleepiness;
- trouble concentrating or remembering;
- irritability;
- need for caffeine or other stimulants to stay awake;
- need for naps after school;
- poor grades;
- trouble sleeping (problems falling asleep or staying asleep).

What your teen can do:

- Get a full night's sleep on a regular basis. Set a regular bedtime. Avoid staying up late to do homework or study. If extracurricular activities after school are too time-consuming, consider cutting back.
- Get up at the same time every morning. Avoid sleeping in on weekends to "catch up on sleep." This does more harm than good by throwing sleep rhythms off.

- Limit caffeine intake, especially after lunchtime.
- Avoid doing anything in bed other than sleeping — reading, writing, eating, watching TV, talking on the phone, or playing videos or other games.
- Avoid TV and computer use (which can be stimulating) for at least an hour before bedtime. Instead, read, listen to quiet music, write in a journal, or other calming activity during this time.
- Drink a warm, non-caffeinated beverage (such as milk) before bed.
- Make the bedroom conducive to sleep. Take the TV, computer, and phone out of the bedroom. Make sure the bedroom is cool and as dark and quiet as possible.
- Turn a bright light on in your room in the morning. This helps the body wake up and shuts down production of sleep hormones. Alarm clocks with a light feature are available on the Internet.

Source: National Institutes of Health



Could your kid have asthma?

If your child has trouble breathing, he or she could have asthma. Your child's doctor can help you. Without treatment, asthma can be serious. Some people even die from it.

To help you find out if your child might have asthma, ask yourself if your child:

- hears a whistling sound when he or she breathes;
- coughs during or after exercise;
- coughs or can't breathe very well and wakes me up when he or she sleeps;
- often gets bad chest colds that take a long time to go away; or
- has trouble breathing when near pets, perfumes, or smoke.

Call the doctor if your child shows any of these signs. Your child may need medicine. Your child's doctor can help him or her get well.

Help controlling asthma is available from the ConnectionsSM Health Management Program. A Health Coach from the Connections Program can send you a symptom response plan to take to your next doctor's appointment. Your doctor can walk you through the plan and show you how to treat your child's asthma, depending on his or her symptoms.

A Health Coach from the ConnectionsSM Health Management Program can help you if you have any questions about your child's asthma, his or her medications, or any other asthma-related questions. To talk to a Health Coach about asthma or any other health concern, call **1-800-ASK-BLUE (1-800-275-2583)**, prompt **2**, any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute



Independence Blue Cross & Highmark Blue Shield

Caring Foundation



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For Children

CHIP: Remember to Renew

The Caring Foundation verifies children's eligibility for CHIP once each year. Your child's *Renewal* form will be mailed to your home every year 90 days prior to the anniversary of his or her enrollment. To avoid your child's coverage being cancelled, it is extremely important that you complete the *Renewal* form and return it to the Foundation as soon as possible.

You have two choices:

- complete and return the form you receive in the mail back to the Foundation; or,
- go to www.compass.state.pa.us and submit your child's renewal information online.

In either case, you must sign the signature page and mail it back along with copies of your current income documentation.

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Managing Autism

Children with autism have trouble relating to others. They may not respond to social cues, like smiles or eye contact. They may dislike being held or cuddled. They may be slow learning to talk. But many children with autism can thrive with early help.

No one type of program or treatment is right for every child. Children learn best when they are very young, so therapy should begin as soon as your child is ready.

Behavioral-Educational Therapy

Special therapists can help your child learn language and social skills. They can also help your child with basic life tasks, like crossing a street safely or counting money. Children with autism do best with highly structured

school programs tailored to their needs — one-on-one, small group, or regular classes with special support.

Medication Therapy

Certain medications may help treat the associated behaviors of autism, such as anxiety.

Ongoing Support

You may be able to support your child at home, with help. If not, then group homes or assisted living settings can provide a safe place for your child.

Looking Ahead

Each child with autism is unique. Some may have only mild symptoms. Others may have symptoms that lessen as they get older. These children often can lead quite normal lives. Children whose autism is more severe may need ongoing support. With help, children with autism can look forward to better lives.

Source: *Autism Society of America*

Note: Please refer to your child's *CHIP Benefits Handbook* for complete details of the terms, limitations, and exclusions of your child's health care coverage.