

With the end of the school year approaching, thoughts turn to testing and getting the best grades to show a measure of academic success. According to *ScienceDaily* (Nov. 11, 2005) reducing the amount of sleep students get at night has a direct impact on their performance at school during the day. According to classroom teachers, elementary and middle school students who stay up late exhibit more learning and attention problems, Brown Medical School and Bradley Hospital research shows. In the study, teachers were not told the amount of sleep students received when completing weekly performance reports. Yet they rated students who had received eight hours or less as having the most trouble recalling old material, learning new lessons and completing high-quality work. Teachers also reported that these students had more difficulty paying attention.

The experiment is the first to ask teachers to report on the effects of sleep restriction in children.

“Just staying up late can cause increased academic difficulty and attention problems for otherwise healthy, well-functioning kids,” said Gahan Fallone, the study’s lead author. “So the results provide professionals and parents with a clear message: When a child is having learning and attention problems, the issue of sleep has to be on the radar screen.”

It is recommended that adolescents get nine hours of nightly sleep. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) offers the following tips on how to get a good night’s sleep:

- Follow a consistent bedtime routine.
- Establish a relaxing setting at bedtime.
- Get a full night’s sleep every night.
- Avoid foods or drinks that contain caffeine, as well as any medicine that has a stimulant, prior to bedtime.
- Do not stay up all hours of the night to “cram” for an exam, do homework, etc. If after-school activities are proving to be too time-consuming, consider cutting back on these activities.
- Keep computers and TVs out of the bedroom.
- Do not go to bed hungry, but don’t eat a big meal before bedtime either.
- Avoid any rigorous exercise within six hours of your bedtime.
- Make your bedroom quiet, dark and a little bit cool.
- Get up at the same time every morning.