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**Is lack of sleep causing your child to gain weight?**

**Lack of sleep leads to increased consumption of fatty foods and snacks for children.**

**Phoenix, AZ (September 7, 2010)** – Is lack of sleep causing your teenager to gain weight? It could be, according to a new study released in the September issue of [SLEEP](#).

Lauri Leadley, President of Valley Sleep Center commented on the study saying,

“Basically, teens are sleeping less, and eating more, which is contributing to our increasing problem of teenage obesity.”

The study shows that teens that slept less than eight hours per night ate higher proportions of fatty foods and snacks than adolescents who slept eight hours or more. The results also suggest that short sleep duration may increase obesity risk by causing small changes in eating patterns that cumulatively alter energy balance, especially in girls.”

The study involved 240 teens between 16 and 19 years of age and 18 percent of participants were obese. It is unclear why the association between shorter sleep durations and unhealthy dietary habits may be stronger in girls than boys. However, one explanation may be the increased propensity for female teens to engage in emotional eating

Results show that shorter weekday sleep time was significantly associated with an increase in the percentage of calories consumed from fats and a decrease in the percentage of calories from carbohydrates. Leadley noted that, “Teens who slept less than eight hours on weeknights consumed 2.2 percent more calories from fats and 3.0 percent fewer calories from carbs than teens who slept eight hours or more.”

A CDC study showed the rate of obesity in U.S. adolescents between the ages of 12 and 19 years was 18.1 percent in 2007-2008. It is believed that sleep may be the missing link in obesity interventions that focus only on diet and exercise. It’s been suggested that improving sleep duration should be an essential component of obesity prevention and weight management programs.



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## What can parents do?

Parenting a teenager can be likened to herding a bunch of cats. The cats all have a mind of their own and are going to go their own way to matter what you do. So with that in mind, how can a parent help their child get more sleep? Here are a few tips.

1. **Encourage your kids to put their cell phones to “bed.”** Alarming number of teens actually sleep with their cell phones next to them in bed, a sleep disturbing distraction. Encourage your kids to put their cell phone in a drawer or even in another room to charge so that you kids can “charge” too. Just like a cell phone needs to plug in to recharge, so our kids need to as well, by sleeping.
2. **Establish curfews.** In our house it’s always been “lights out” by 11:00 PM on weeknights. This has helped our teens to establish good sleep routines, and get the rest they need.
3. **Help them create a comfy “cave.”** Having a comfortable bed to sleep in could make all the difference in encouraging your teen to get some rest. Help your teen pick out some comfy sheets and pillows and make their bed a place where they like to go.
4. **Let them sleep in on weekends.** According to the [American Sleep Disorders Association](#), the average teenager needs around 9.5 hours of sleep per night, because hormones that are critical to [growth](#) and [sexual maturation](#) are released *mostly* during slumber. So if you teen needs the extra sleep on the weekend let them sleep.

## About Valley Sleep Center

Since 2002, Valley Sleep Center has provided Arizona with diagnostic sleep disorder testing in a home-like atmosphere, ensuring a comfortable, relaxing experience for patients. Their physicians are Board Certified Sleep Medicine Specialists and they are accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. They provide diagnostic testing for a multitude of sleep related disorders including insomnia, sleep apnea, snoring, excessive daytime sleepiness, hypertension, sleepwalking, and pediatric sleep problems.

**For more information contact Lauri Leadley at 480-830-3900 or visit [www.valleysleepcenter.com](http://www.valleysleepcenter.com).**

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