



March 24th, 2013

Keep Your Teen Healthy

Almost 2.9 million Canadians are teenagers, and while most of us said goodbye to our teenage years many years ago, we may have children, grandchildren or young friends in this age group.

Teens need sleep!

A major study in the US has been looking at teen health since the mid-90s. A report was released based on surveys looking at their sleep patterns and possible consequences. Twenty-three percent of teens reported going to sleep after 11:30 pm and a further 22% after 1:30 am! Eighty percent of teens didn't get the necessary 9 hours of sleep. The consequences, while not necessarily deemed cause/effect, were lower grades and increased emotional distress. Better keep up the nagging!

How do you know if your teen needs more sleep? Does s/he have trouble getting up in the morning? Have trouble staying awake in class? Feel an overwhelming need for a nap after school? Complain about feeling sleepy all the time? Adolescent bodies and minds are developing quickly and they need 9-10 hours of sleep per night. Sufficient sleep is associated with improved memory, concentration and motivation, and reduced depression.

Active teens are healthier!

As with sleep, our teens need more exercise! Only one-quarter of teens are getting the recommended 60 minutes of moderate-vigorous activity daily – and that's on average. Unfortunately, heavier adolescents are getting even less! Regular exercise not only benefits youth physically, but also psychologically. It enhances many aspects of academics as well. Finally, it sets up a pattern of behaviour that carries into adulthood – and, hopefully, disease prevention.

We've all heard the reports – child and teen rates of obesity have been growing since the 1970s and now type 2 diabetes, once reserved for the elderly, is joining the trend. Researchers recently published the results of an analysis of studies conducted since 1999 and have concluded that exercise counters both insulin resistance and insulin deficiency in youth – just as it does with adults. Do you need any more reasons to get your kids (and you!) moving?

Many people think pharmacy services only play a role in the lives of older people, but your pharmacist is there to help every member of your family, at any age. Talk to them for advice and better health.