



Bedtime problems

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Be assured you are not alone and **your son** is behaving just like a **pre-teenager**. Puberty is setting in and he's **determined** to be treated as a "**young adult**" (and probably **acts like a baby** some of the time!). The trouble is that **at this age** children are **unable** to see **reason** - and that's why they have **parents** looking after them.

Obviously **children** vary in their **sleep requirements** but at 12 your son needs about **nine to ten hours** sleep a night. So if he gets up for **school** at **7.00am** he'll need to be **in bed** and ready to drop off by **9.30pm**. The **problem** is that **adolescents** find it **difficult** to go to sleep as their **body clocks** want them to stay up later and **sleep longer** in the morning. In fact at least **one state** in the **US** changed the time of the **school day**, starting an **hour later** and found that **students** were much **more alert** and did better in their **studies**.



However that **doesn't help** you. First of all you need to establish a **bedtime routine** - just as **you did** when he was a baby. **Baths** are good at helping us to **wind down** and relax so you could **try** that. Plus **avoid caffeine** containing **foods and drinks** like coffee, cola and chocolate. A **hot milky** drink is often **beneficial**.

What you have to **stop** is his use of the **computer** and **TV** in his **room** at night. One **study** showed that just **answering emails** at night has the **effect** of a double **expresso coffee!** And **computer games** can be very **addictive**. So if you have to, **remove** the computer and TV from his room. **Suggest** he **reads** in bed or listens to an **audio-book** to help him drop off. He'll **complain** and tell you that all his **friends** play **computer games** etc at night but you'll have to **be firm**.

Once he gets into the **routine** and knows you are not going to **change your mind**, you could let him have his **TV and computer** back in his room on **Friday** and **Saturday nights** - if he doesn't have to **get up early** the next morning.

Hopefully his **mood** will **improve** - but some people are **always grumpy** when they wake up. **Teenagers** need **routine** in their lives just as **younger children** do - even if they **tell you** otherwise. He's not a **baby** but he isn't old enough or **mature enough** to take **control** of his own life - he still **needs** your **guidance**.

This article first appeared in *The Scotsman*.

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