Importance of Sleep for Children and Adolescents

- Sleep is a universal and indispensable part of life, and research suggests that it is particularly important for promoting the mental and physical health of children and teenagers.

- Sleep is far more than just a period of inactivity! Sleep serves as a time for people to consolidate learning and memory, bolster their immune system, clear out toxins that accumulate in the brain during the day, and release hormones that help children and adolescents grow, develop, and repair their bodies.

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends different amounts of sleep according to age group:
  - Infants under 1 year: 12-16 hours
  - Toddlers 1-2 years old: 11-14 hours
  - Children 3-5 years old: 10-13 hours
  - Children 6-12 years old: 9-12 hours
  - Teenagers 13-18 years old: 8-10 hours

- Many research studies have examined the consequences of poor sleep in children and adolescents. Some of the outcomes consistently associated with poor sleep include:
  - More sleepiness throughout the day
  - More tardiness at school due to oversleeping
  - Poor concentration, slower reaction time, shorter attention span, and less creativity
  - Lower grades in school
  - For teenagers who drive, higher likelihood of getting into car accidents
  - Increased risk for mental health problems like anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts/behaviors

Tips for Improving the Quantity and Quality of Your Child’s Sleep

**Children 1-5 years old:**
- Maintain a daily sleep schedule and consistent bedtime routine.
- Set limits that are consistent, communicated and enforced. Encourage use of a security object such as a blanket or stuffed animal.
- Have a relaxing bedtime routine that ends in the room where the child sleeps.
- Child should sleep in the same sleeping environment every night, in a room that is cool, quiet and dark.

**Children 6-12 years old**
- Teach school-aged children about healthy sleep habits.
- Continue to emphasize need for regular and consistent sleep schedule and bedtime routine.
- Make child’s bedroom conducive to sleep – dark, cool and quiet.
- Keep TV, computers, and other screens out of the bedroom.
- Engage in a quiet family activity together before bedtime, like reading.
- If child wakes up during the night, walk them back to their room with as little commotion as possible.

**Teenagers 13-18 years old**
- Set a regular bedtime and rise time, including on weekends.
- Encourage using bed only for sleeping – not for doing homework or watching movies/TV.
- Consider banning screen time one hour before bedtime and removing screens/phones from the bedroom.
- Encourage exercise and discourage napping during the day.
- Considering banning caffeinated drinks or limiting consumption to morning only.
- Encourage quiet, relaxing, non-screen activities before bedtime, like reading or taking a shower/bath.