

Summer/Fall 2005

## **Back-to-Sleep**

### *Back-to-School Season Creates a Shorter Sleep Schedule*

American Osteopathic Association

According to a recent survey conducted by the National Sleep Foundation, 60 percent of children under the age of 18 complained of being tired during the day and 15 percent of children reported falling asleep at school during the past year. Teenagers are more likely to complain of being tired during the day than are younger children, according to the study.

“Biological changes during puberty affect adolescents’ sleep patterns making them physiologically unable to fall asleep until at least 11:00 p.m.,” explains Craig M. Wax, D.O., an osteopathic family physician from Mullica Hill, NJ. “This may be fine during the summer when they can sleep later in the morning, but it’s not fine during the school year.”

While the average teen needs approximately nine hours of sleep, a bedtime of 11:00 p.m. means he or she only gets an estimated seven hours of sleep because of current school schedules. As a result, many teens experience fatigue throughout the school day.

Some effects of sleep deprivation may include:

- Limited ability to learn, listen and concentrate
- Acne and other skin problems
- Increased likelihood of illness
- Aggressive or inappropriate behavior such as yelling or being impatient with teachers or family members
- Overeating or unhealthy eating that may lead to weight gain
- Increased use of caffeine and nicotine

“The most frightening consequences of sleepiness are injuries related to attention lapses and delayed response times at critical moments, such as while driving,” explains Dr. Wax.

Drowsiness was reported as the most frequent cause in at least 100,000 police-reported traffic crashes each year, killing more than 1,500 Americans and injuring another 71,000,

according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Drivers under the age of 25 are involved in more than 50 percent of these crashes. Dr. Wax suggests following a few sleeping tips to improve sleep patterns:

## **Back to Sleep Health For the Whole Family**

- **Prioritize sleep.** Decide what you need to change to get enough sleep. For instance, make an earlier bedtime to allow for an earlier wake up.
- **Keep it consistent:** Decide on times for going to bed and waking up. Try to stay as close as you can to the times on the weekends. A consistent sleep schedule allows the body to get in sync with its natural pattern.
- **Prepare your body:** Don’t eat, drink, or exercise within a few hours of your bedtime. Stick to quiet, calm activities.
- **Create a bedtime ritual:** Do the same things every night before going to sleep to teach your body the signals of bedtime.
- **Create a sleep sanctuary.** A bedroom should be cool, quiet and dark.
- **Nap right.** While a good nap can be beneficial, a nap that is too long or too close to bedtime can interfere with a regular sleep schedule.
- **Don’t replace sleep:** Pills, vitamins or drinks cannot replace a good night’s sleep. Caffeine can hurt sleep if it is consumed too close to bedtime. Nicotine and alcohol also interfere with sleep.

He further explains that obtaining enough sleep is a vital part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

## **Growing Pains: Steroid Abuse Among Professional Athletes Effect on Young Adults** American Osteopathic Association

Recent reports of steroid use in Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Football League and the Olympics have prompted widespread concern, including plans to propose legislation for a new drug-testing policy headed by Sen. John McCain (R-AZ).

McCain is quoted in the Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> edition of The New York Times explaining that his concern is not about what baseball stars Barry Bonds or

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Jason Giambi do to their bodies. Instead, he worries about what effect the use of these performance-enhancing drugs in the MLB might have on high school athletes. "What these young athletes fail to realize is the damaging effect steroids have on a person's physical and psychological health over time," says Craig M. Wax, D.O., an osteopathic Family Physician in Mullica Hill, NJ. "The more we learn about these drugs, the scarier they become."

It was not always known that anabolic steroids were bad for your health. They were widely used in the 1970s and 80s by athletes who enjoyed the quick physical results they produced. However, health officials soon recognized the dangers of doping and banned the sale of steroids without a prescription in 1990.

Nevertheless, steroids were not banned from MLB until 2002; the designer steroid Tetrahydrogestrinone, known as THG, wasn't prohibited until March 2004; and Human Growth Hormones are still legal supplements for the athletes. "People are finally starting to realize that these drugs could cause serious side effects," says Dr. Wax. "To say that they do not work is wrong. However, to say they work without significant health side effects, that is another story."

Despite the dangers associated with steroids, they continue to be used by males and females of all ages. In fact, use among teenagers has increased according to the 2003 Monitoring the Future Survey (MTF) funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The survey found that 6.5 percent of high school athletes used an anabolic steroid during their sporting careers. Even more disturbing is that 2.5 percent of 8<sup>th</sup> graders have experimented with this dangerous substance.

"Young adults are very susceptible to the healthy, fit images they see on television," says Dr. Wax "in actuality, by taking steroids, they are being counter productive to achieving their fitness goals and overall wellness. A recent survey showed that it was almost a 50-50 split when people were asked if they would use steroids to gain a gold medal or to be successful in a sport. That is alarming considering the knowledge of the harmful side effects of steroid use."

Though the initial effect on appearance may be dramatic, the long-term effects on the body and mind are less than appealing. Coaches and parents should all be on the lookout for these clues to possible steroid use: Acne, Jaundice, Halitosis (bad breath), Trembling, Baldness, Rapid increase in body mass (weight gain). In long-term users more serious conditions can develop such as liver cancer, heart attack, and infection. The transmission of HIV/AIDS has also been reported among those that inject the drug directly into their muscles.

Psychological changes occur as well. "Roid rage" or acts of extreme aggression, delusion, depression and mania have all been documented in the last few decades. Steroids have also been named as a gateway drug to other illegal substances and risky behavior. These harmful side effects prompted President George Bush, in his State of the Union address last January, to call upon coaches and players "to get rid of steroids now."

"These drugs wreak havoc on the body and the mind, but people often can't see past the impressive physical changes," says Dr. Wax. According to Dr. Wax, doping is totally preventable. He says that if people are taught about steroids at a young age, they will more likely avoid them altogether.

"Young athletes are in the mindset of invincibility and consequently they are increasingly more inclined to use these drugs—especially if they see professional athletes breaking world records while using them" explains Dr. Wax. "But if they are exposed to the noticeable negative side effects like hair loss, breast development and testicular shrinkage in men; or deepening voice and facial or body hair development in women; they are less likely to ever start using the substances."

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