

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CONTACT:

Flannery O'Neil
Arizona Osteopathic Medical Association
602.266.6699
602.266.1393
flannery@az-osteo.org
<http://www.az-osteo.org>

Back-to-Sleep

Back-to-School Season Creates a Shorter Sleep Schedule

As children throughout the country awake to a new school year, parents contemplate whether their child's summer sleeping schedule will be saved by the bell.

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 it physiologically more difficult to fall asleep at a reasonable bedtime,” explains James L. Gross, D.O., an osteopathic Sleep Medicine physician from Scottsdale, Arizona. “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 to nine and a half 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
- Aggressive or inappropriate behavior such as yelling or being impatient with teachers or family members
- 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. Gross.

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. Gross suggests following a few sleeping tips to improve sleep patterns:

- **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 circadian 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.
- **Avoid Daytime napping.** Daytime napping lessens a person's ability to fall asleep at night.
- **Don't replace sleep:** Medications, 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.

Preventive medicine is just one element of the spectrum of care that osteopathic physicians (D.O.s) provide. As complete physicians, D.O.s are able to prescribe medication, perform surgery and can be found practicing in all areas of medicine. D.O.s can also use their hands to help diagnose and treat injury and illness and to encourage the body's natural tendency toward good health through the use of Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment (OMT). For more information about D.O.s and osteopathic medicine, visit <http://www.az-osteop.org>.

The Arizona Osteopathic Medical Association (AOMA) is a vital, working state association with administrative and elected officers, committee chairpersons, and committee members actively working on a broad scope of professional and public affairs. The Association is a positive force that serves to promote and protect the profession.

###