

# Parent Power

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**FIRST YEAR**  
PARENT GUIDELINES

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PLANET  
Youth



# ABOUT PLANET YOUTH

Planet Youth is an evidence-based primary prevention project that provides us with the opportunity to improve the long-term health and wellbeing of our children. Every two years, we survey all of the 15 and 16 year olds in our schools in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon, and this gives us the information we need to make positive changes for the younger children coming behind them.

This booklet has been developed to bring some of that information to parents who have children starting post-primary school and we hope you find it useful.

The 5,079 teenagers that participated throughout the region in the November 2024 Planet Youth survey told us that:

**91%**

Easy to get caring and warmth from parents



**66%**

Spend 3 hours or more on social media daily



**35%**

Out after midnight



**55%**

Not getting enough sleep



**80%**

Have a phone in their bedroom at night



**25%**

Get alcohol from parents



**56%**

Report good mental health



**73%**

Report good physical health

**86%**

Feel safe in their community

**33%**

Reported self-harm once or more



**61%**

Exercise 3 times a week or more



**31%**

Drunk last month



**14%**

Are daily vapers



**12%**

Have tried Cannabis



**28%**

Tried alcohol by 13

# FAMILY TIME

This was the fourth Planet Youth survey, and it had some really positive findings related to family life and the relationships that our teenagers have with their parents. 91% stated that it's easy to receive caring and warmth from their parents. Teens also report spending a lot of time with their parents and 84% stated that their parents know where they are in the evenings.

As they get older, it is important to maintain good quality communication with our teens and to stay connected, interested and engaged in what's happening in their lives. The survey showed that we are doing well here too, as 80% of our teens said that it's easy to talk to their parents or carers about personal matters.

Having shared interests, regular family mealtimes, family activities and family meetings creates enjoyable time and space to chat with, and listen to, our teenagers.

As parents, we are the most important role models or our teens so it is important that we set a good example with our own behaviours.

**91%**

Easy to get caring and warmth from parents





# SCREEN TIME GUIDELINES

The Planet Youth survey showed us that 66% of our young people are spending 3 hours a day or more on social media. We know that too much screen time impacts upon homework and hobbies and can be detrimental to good mental health. **Screen use should be kept to a maximum of 2 hours per day** after homework and other activities are completed.

Screens should be off at least one hour before bed **and kept out of bedrooms at night.**

If you can have these guidelines in place from first year they will become increasingly important as your child gets older. Talk to your child about their online life and be a good role model with your own screen use.

66%

Spend 3 hours or more on social media daily



80% have a phone in their bedroom at night



# BEDTIME GUIDELINES

55%

Don't get enough sleep



The Planet Youth survey revealed that over half of our young people are not getting enough sleep. The suggested guidelines for bedtime are:

FIRST YEAR	09:30PM
SECOND YEAR	09:45PM
THIRD YEAR	10:00PM
TRANSITION YEAR	10:15PM
FIFTH YEAR	10:30PM
LEAVING CERT YEAR	10:45PM



It is recommended that teenagers get a minimum **8 to 10 hours** of undisturbed sleep per night. For example; a first year that has to get up at 07.30am should be asleep by 09.30pm in order to get their 10 hours of sleep. No child should have a phone in their bedroom at night, a regular alarm clock is enough.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

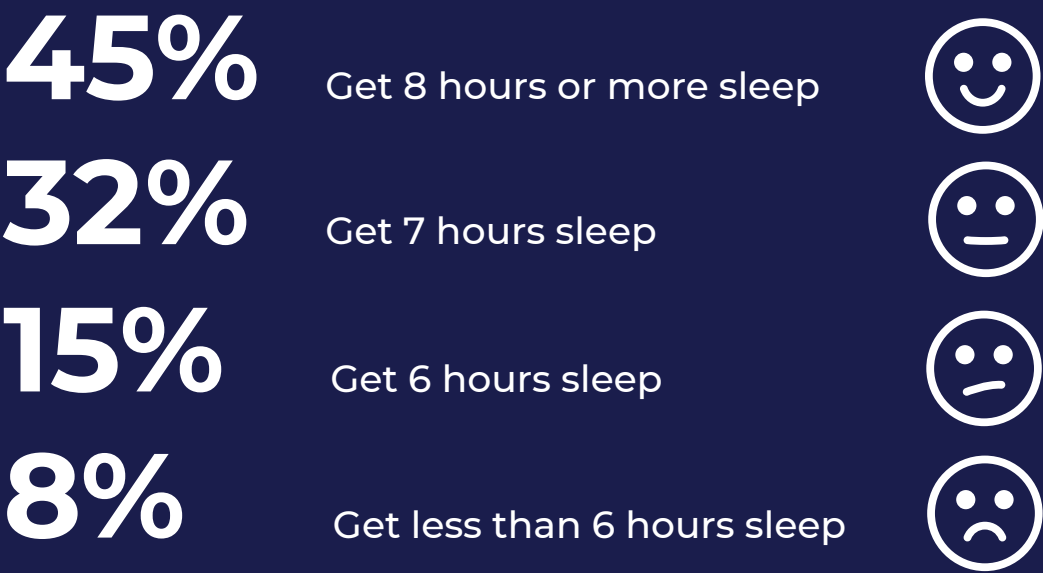
The Planet Youth survey has shown us just how little sleep our teens are getting. This is a significant problem because sleep plays a critical role in a teenager's development, it is every bit as important as nutrition and physical activity.

Without sufficient quality sleep, every aspect of a teen's life becomes more challenging. Physical health and mental health are affected, school becomes harder, self-esteem, resilience, and emotional development are impacted, and small problems often appear insurmountable.

Don't underestimate the importance of helping your teenager to get sufficient, good quality sleep. That could just be improving their sleep environment, but good sleep hygiene, limited screen time, reduced caffeine, and a consistent sleep routine can all help also.

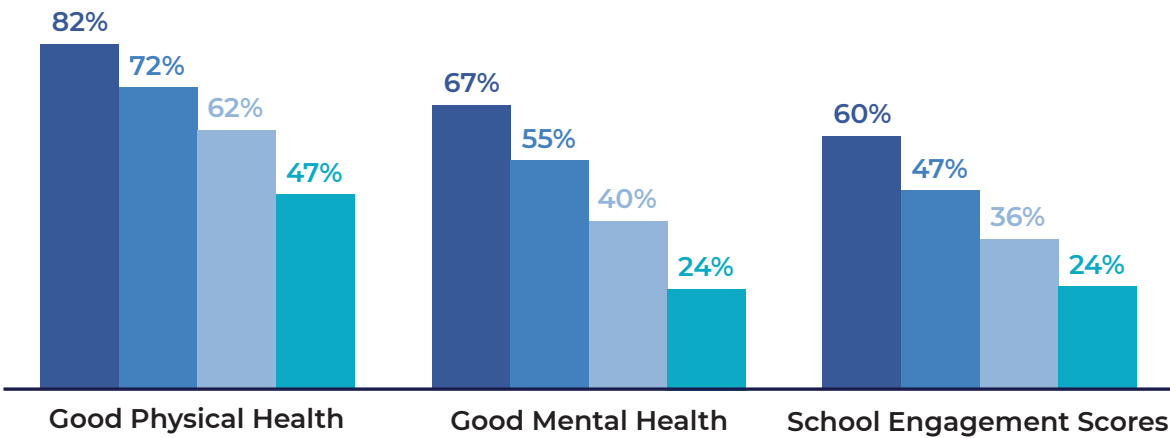
By creating a sleep positive culture in your home, you will be helping your teenager optimise their potential in many aspects of their development, health and wellbeing.

## HOW MUCH SLEEP DO OUR TEENS GET?



# THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

■ 8 hours or more sleep ■ 7 hours sleep ■ 6 hours sleep ■ Less than 6 hours sleep







# VAPING, SMOKING, NICOTINE POUCHES AND CANNABIS

Daily smoking and monthly cannabis use rates have decreased slightly since the last survey. However, daily vaping rates remain high at 14% and the use of nicotine pouches has become common also.

The use of nicotine is unsafe for teenagers as it is a substance that is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development.

Using nicotine in adolescence can affect the parts of the brain that regulate attention, learning, mood, and impulse control. It may also increase the risk of future addiction to other drugs. Additionally, vaping or inhaling any substance can cause harm to the lungs and respiratory tract.

Experimentation with vapes is not uncommon in first-year, so talk to your teen about why vaping is harmful for them, and set a good example by being nicotine free.

## INTERESTS, HOBBIES & SPORTS

It is important that young people are encouraged to keep engaging in quality supervised, structured activities that interest them as they get older.

Physical activity is important for good health and wellbeing but not every child is interested in sports. Other hobbies and interests that provide opportunities to get involved in their community outside of school allow our children to further develop their social skills and build emotional resilience.

Good quality supervised and structured activities are also a known protective factor against substance use and anti-social behaviour.

34%

Play team sports 3 times a week or more



61%

Exercise 3 times a week or more



14%

Are daily vapers



4%

Are daily smokers



5%

Used cannabis in the last month



16%

Have tried nicotine pouches



73%

Have  
tried  
alcohol



31%

Drunk in  
the last  
month



## ALCOHOL AND PARENTS

Alcohol is the most commonly used substance among young people in Ireland. As our teenagers get older, they will increasingly ask parents for access to alcohol to use before or at parties and events. These requests can start as early as second year and become more common by transition year.

Use of alcohol at a young age can impair brain development and will increase the chances of developing a dependency later in life. This is in addition to increasing the risk of other alcohol-related harms. The best thing we can do for our teenagers is to try and defer all alcohol use until they are 18 years of age.

The Planet Youth survey shows us just how important parental attitude and parental alcohol supply is when it comes to adolescent binge drinking. Teenagers that get alcohol from a parent are getting drunk at two and half times the rate of those that don't. Introducing alcohol to teenagers at home, in the pursuit of teaching them to drink responsibly, may have the opposite effect.

The chart opposite clearly shows the importance of parental disapproval. Parents don't have to be at one end of the scale or the other, every conversation and effort made to defer alcohol use is important.

25%

Regularly get  
alcohol from  
their parent



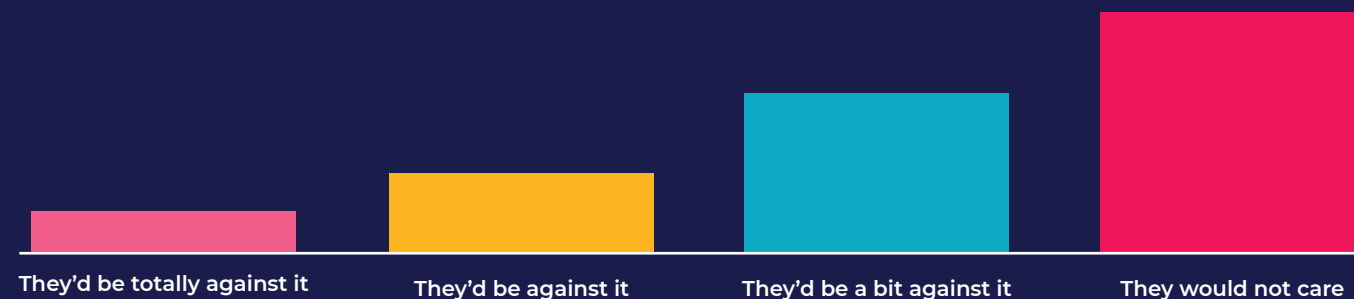
27%

Regularly  
drink at a  
friend's home



## OF THE 31% OF PUPILS THAT WERE DRUNK IN THE LAST MONTH

How would your parents react if you got drunk?







**The Parent Power booklet is available to view and download in a variety of languages:**

English

Irish (Íoslódáil i ngaeilge)

Arabic ( تحميل باللغة العربية )

Lithuanian (Atsisiųsti lietuvių kalba)

Polish (Pobierz w języku polskim)

Portuguese (Baixar em polonês)

Russian (Скачать на русском языке)

Slovak (Stiahnuť v slovenčine)

Ukrainian (Завантажити українською)