



Sleep ...

The importance of getting those Z's

Good sleep habits are extremely important. "Early to bed, early to rise makes a person healthy, wealthy and wise." I don't know about the wealthy part, but good sleep habits have been proven to improve people's health and mental state.

Sleep plays a vital role in good health and well-being throughout your life. Getting enough quality sleep at the right times can help protect your mental health, physical health, quality of life, and safety. The way you feel while you're awake depends in part on what happens while you're sleeping. During sleep, your body is working to support healthy brain function and maintain your physical health. In children and teens, sleep also helps support growth and development. The damage from sleep deficiency can occur in an instant (such as a car crash), or it can harm you over time. For example, ongoing sleep deficiency can raise your risk for some chronic health problems. It also can affect how well you think, react, work, learn, and get along with others.



A good night's sleep does the following:

- Improves learning and problem-solving skills; helps one pay attention; make decisions; and be creative
- Helps heal and repair blood vessels; sleep deficiency increases the risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, kidney disease and stroke.
- Maintains health balance of hormones that make you feel hungry (ghrelin) or full (leptin); sleep deficiency causes an increase in ghrelin and decrease in leptin which makes one feel hungrier than when they are well rested
- Affects how your body reacts to insulin; sleep deficiency can result in a higher than normal blood sugar and increase the risk of diabetes.
- Healthy growth and development in children and teens
- Better immune system to fight against foreign or harmful substances.
- Better function and safety throughout the day

The amount of sleep one needs changes over the course of one's life and can vary from person to person:

- Infants: 12-16 hours/day
- Children 1-2 years of age: 11-14 hours/day
- Children 3-5 years of age: 10-12 hours/day
- Children 6-12 years of age: 9-12 hours/day
- Teens 13-18 years of age: 8-10 hours/day
- Adults 18+ : 7-8 hours/day

Some strategies to improve sleep habits are:

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. For children, have a set bedtime and a bedtime routine. Don't use the child's bedroom for timeouts or punishment.
- Try to keep the same sleep schedule on weeknights and weekends. Limit the difference to no more than about an hour. Staying up late and sleeping in late on weekends can disrupt your body clock's sleep–wake rhythm.
- Use the hour before bed for quiet time. Avoid strenuous exercise and bright artificial light, such as from a TV or computer screen. The light may signal the brain that it's time to be awake.
- Avoid heavy and/or large meals within a couple hours of bedtime. (Having a light snack is okay.) Also, avoid alcoholic drinks before bed.
- Avoid nicotine (for example, cigarettes) and caffeine (including caffeinated soda, coffee, tea, and chocolate). Nicotine and caffeine are stimulants, and both substances can interfere with sleep. The effects of caffeine can last as long as 8 hours. So, a cup of coffee in the late afternoon can make it hard for you to fall asleep at night.
- Spend time outside every day (when possible) and be physically active.
- Keep your bedroom quiet, cool, and dark (a dim night light is fine, if needed).
- Take a hot bath or use relaxation techniques before bed.

The power of sleep is underestimated. To reduce risk of disease/illness/infections, as well as increase daily productiveness, socialization and a healthy mental state, sleep is much needed. It may take some schedule and habit adjusting to help one's body get on a good sleep/wake rhythm, but in the long-run, the benefits are far worth the effort.

The following website was sourced and referenced for this article:
<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/sleep-deprivation-and-deficiency>

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