

Rest & Relaxation

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Introduction to Sleep

Rest during sleep enables your body to repair cells, process information from the day, and improve the immune system. Our cognitive function is significantly reduced if we do not get enough sleep. In fact, the body will manually start to shut down if you try to not sleep in as little as 17 hours. This “shut down” is similar to drinking alcohol. Seventeen hours is the equivalent to 2 glasses of wine. How many of us would not drink and drive, and yet we will rob our bodies of sleep and create the same effect and still drive thinking we are just fine?

The American Cancer Society found that there is a higher chance of death in individuals who sleep less than 7 hours per night (studies vary from 10% to 30%). There is even a reduced longevity for those who sleep over 9 hours per night. (There is still discussion on whether there is an underlying issue that causes more sleep or whether the act of sleeping is a factor in and of itself.)

However, there is also research that worrying about your sleep quality may affect you as much as the your actual sleep quality. A recent study showed people who thought they had insomnia scored worse whether or not they actually had insomnia! The mind is a powerful thing. So do your best, but don't sweat it and worry about it, because you'll just make it even harder to sleep well.

Breaking the Bad Patterns

Need help to break bad bedtime habits like not falling asleep until midnight or waking several times during the night? Try this effective program.

1. First night, go to bed when you are tired.
2. Get up as soon as you wake, or at your alarm time (5 to 7am is best), even if you only got 2 hours sleep!
3. Next night try to go to bed by your bedtime and get up as soon as you wake or your alarm time. You may have to repeat until you sleep through the night.

National Sleep Foundation offers help & tips (202) 347-3471 www.sleepfoundation.org

Five steps for a good night's sleep:

1. Good preparations: Avoid eating at least 2 to 3 hours before bed, avoid caffeine entirely, and have a little quiet time before going to the bedroom to unwind before you even lie down. Don't use the bed for reading, watching TV, etc. Watch out for stimulating foods at lunch, chocolate, coffee, etc.
2. Go to bed at a regular time each night, preferably before 9pm.
3. Sleep in a dark, quiet room (especially important for shift workers), on a comfortable bed.
4. If you wake in the middle of the night, lie as still as possible in one spot and count your blessings or deep breathe. Tossing and turning will only make things worse. If you wake within 1 hour of your normal rising time, it is usually better to just get up. Don't try to get in that last hour.
5. Get up at the same time each morning, even if you went to bed late!

What about age old tips for getting sleep? Didn't grandma say have a glass of milk before bed? Some people

may find the milk relaxing, but the body has to digest the food thus not getting proper rest. Not to mention more bathroom trips.

It has also been found that going to bed at the same time each night is VERY important, not only for your circadian rhythm, but to help you sleep well. But just as important as going to bed on time, is waking up at a regular time. In fact studies show it is vital for you to get up at the same time every day, including weekends, even if you go to bed late. You can't just make up lost sleep by sleeping in. Many people have trouble falling a sleep or staying asleep because of this alone.

Quick Tips for Optimal Sleep

MUSIC: Music helps increase melatonin, which is directly linked to having a good nights rest. So sing during the day and sleep sweet at night. You need to participate in the music, sing or play with it.

MODERATE EXERCISE: Strenuous exercise will stimulate the body and keep it active, however a walk (brisk if you're health, light if you are not) can reduce stress and help aid sleep.

MOTIONLESS: Sleep experts recommend you lying a still as possible while trying to fall asleep.

MAKE UP: Don't go to bed angry. Make amends with those who you've had conflicts with, and when you can't, give it up.

MAKE-OVER: An orderly room can have a calming effect and make it more pleasant to be in the room even with your eyes closed.

MEDITATION: Relax, de-stress, with meditation or prayer. Prayer has been shown to lower blood pressure and decrease stress.

MINIMIZE FOOD: Don't eat a heavy meal a few hours before bed. It disrupts sleep to have your digestive tract working at night.

MARGINAL LIGHT: Keep your room as dark as possible. Not only does it help keep your eyes closed and give your body the sense of "time to go to bed," but it helps with melatonin production - good for tomorrows sleep.

MATTRESS: You may need a new one. If it is too soggy or too hard your body roams around trying to get comfortable.

MANAGEMENT: Stay on schedule. Re-program your circadian rhythm by staying on schedule and getting bright sunlight or use a light box.

MONOTONOUS: Don't read, watch TV, or talk in bed. This is not the time for stimulating the mind. Sleep experts suggest only sleep in your bed to train your brain this is what you are here to do.

Melatonin & Sleep

Melatonin is a hormone that rises in the evening usually around 9pm (now you know why 9pm is so important) and aids you with sleep. It is the rest and relax hormone so to speak.

So, why not take it via a pill to help you sleep each night? Here are some reasons to be cautious when supplementing: Your body may significantly slow down its own production of melatonin; many manufacturers use synthetics; too much of it can cause depression; and since melatonin not well regulated the dose listed may not be accurate.

The GOOD NEWS is your body makes melatonin from serotonin (which comes from tryptophan) in the pineal gland. Tryptophan is found in various foods such as almonds, tofu, and gluten. You can also get melatonin directly

from food, like bananas. Your body also makes melatonin directly in the eye as long as there is darkness, hence, when we sleep at night. (If you work shifts, it is very important to darken your room as best as you can.)

Rest & Relaxation

Yearly - Recreate Yearly or monthly we need some recreation time to completely rid ourselves of the daily grind, the bills, the hassles. This rest is a time to debrief your mind.

Weekly - Revive The weekly cycle is a quandary to evolutionists. It has no bearing on astronomy and yet for centuries societies have followed it. In fact, when France tried a 10 day work week, it caused all kinds of problems. We need a break from our jobs, school, chores, and other daily grinds that go on and on. One journalist from the National Geographic study on longevity said they felt the Sabbath the way the Seventh-Day Adventist keep it, is one of the keys to a long healthy life.

Daily - Relax & Rejuvenate We need a few moments each day to meditate and just slow down. This is more for the mind than for the body's health, but even still it is important. Prayer time is an essential part of this process. And of course we need sleep every night to let the body rebuild and restore.

Getting Enough We all know how important sleep is so we are sure to get enough right? Well, first of all what is enough? The National Sleep Institute says too much can be just a bad (or a sign something is wrong, as mentioned before) as too little. The recommended amount is 7 to 8 hours for adults, 9 for teenagers, 10 to 11 hours for 6 to 12 year-olds, and more for younger children. And believe it or not the hours before midnight are worth twice as much to your body.

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