

An Ounce of Prevention

Complimentary

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Are You Getting a Good Night's Sleep?

-Psychologytools.org

Good sleep is influenced by many factors. Record how many of these things you have done in the last week and consider making changes to your routine.

Things That are Known to Make Sleep Worse

- Napping during the day
- Watching television in bed
- Using a device with a bright screen in the hour before bedtime (e.g. a smartphone, a laptop)
- Consuming drinks containing caffeine (includes tea, coffee, cola, energy drinks, hot chocolate)
 - *How many each day?*
 - *What time of the day was your last caffeinated drink? (try to avoid caffeine after 6pm)*
- Drinking alcohol (alcohol typically leads to interrupted sleep)
- Eating a heavy meal less than 3 hours before bedtime
- Staying in bed even if you can't fall asleep (it's better to get up and do something relaxing, then try again later)

Guidelines for Better Sleep

Sleeping well is a habit that you can learn! Small changes can have big effects. Start today by following these guidelines:

Take care of your body

- Do not drink caffeine: no tea, coffee, or coca-cola after 4 o'clock
- Do not eat a big or spicy meal late in the evening
- Do not go to bed hungry
- Avoid alcohol as it interferes with sleep

Physical exercise, such as a brisk walk, in the late afternoon can help to make your body tired and help you to sleep. Try to do some exercise every day.

Sleep only at night-time and do not have day-time naps, no matter how tired you feel. Naps keep the problem going by making it harder for you to get to sleep the next night.

Having a regular bedtime routine teaches your body when it's time to go to sleep.

- Have a soothing drink like camomile tea or a milky drink
- Have a bath, or a routine of washing your face and brushing your teeth
- Go to bed at same time each night
- When in bed think of nice things (e.g. think of 5 nice things that happened that day– they might be big or small, such as a nice conversation, seeing the sunshine, or hearing nice music on the radio)
- Do a relaxed breathing exercise (one hand on stomach the other on your chest, deliberately

slow your breathing, breathe deeply in your stomach instead of high in your chest)

- Try and wake up the same time every day, even if this is tiring to begin with.

Coping with bad dreams can be difficult. Some people don't like relaxation before going to sleep, or are scared of letting go. If that is you, try these preparation techniques instead:

- Prepare yourself in case you have bad dreams by thinking of a bad dream then think of a different ending for it. Practice this new ending many times before going to sleep.
- Before going to sleep prepare to re-orient yourself when you wake from a bad dream.
- Remind yourself that you are at home, that you are safe. Imagine your street, buses, local shops.
- Put a damp towel or a bowl of water by the bed to splash your face, place a special object by the bed, such as a photograph, or a small soft toy.
- Practice imagining yourself waking up from a bad dream and reorienting yourself to the present, to safety by splashing your face, touching special object, having a bottle of rose or lavender essential oil to sniff, going to window to see surroundings.
- When you wake up from a bad dream- move your body if you can and reorient yourself immediately (touching object, wetting face, going to the window, talk to yourself in a reassuring way).

Make your bedroom a pleasant place to be

- Get a nightlight
- Keep it clean and tidy
- Introduce pleasant smells such as a drop of lavender oil onto the pillow
- Get extra pillows
- Make sure that your home is safe e.g. doors locked, windows closed.

REMEMBER: Bed is for sleeping, so if you cannot sleep after 30 minutes, get up and do another activity elsewhere such as reading or listening to music (try and avoid TV as it can wake you up). After 15 minutes return to bed and try to sleep again. If you still can't sleep after 30 minutes get up again.

Common Sleep Myths

There are many common myths about sleep. We hear them frequently, and may even experience them far too often. Sometimes they can be characterized as "old wives tales," but there are other times the incorrect information can be serious and even dangerous. The National Sleep Foundation has compiled this list of common myths about sleep, and the facts that dispel them.

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1. Snoring is a common problem, especially among men, but it isn't harmful. Although snoring may be harmless for most people, it can be a symptom of a life threatening sleep disorder called sleep apnea, especially if it is accompanied by severe daytime sleepiness. Sleep apnea is characterized by pauses in breathing that prevent air from flowing into or out of a sleeping person's airways. People with sleep apnea awaken frequently during the night gasping for breath. The breathing pauses reduce blood oxygen levels, can strain the heart and cardiovascular system, and increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. Snoring on a frequent or regular basis has been directly associated with hypertension. Obesity and a large neck can contribute to sleep apnea. Sleep apnea can be treated; men and women who snore loudly, especially if pauses in the snoring are noted, should consult a physician.

2. You can "cheat" on the amount of sleep you get. Sleep experts say most adults need between seven and nine hours of sleep each night for optimum performance, health and safety. When we don't get adequate sleep, we accumulate a sleep debt that can be difficult to "pay back" if it becomes too big. The resulting sleep deprivation has been linked to health problems such as obesity and high blood pressure, negative mood and behavior, decreased productivity, and safety issues in the home, on the job, and on the road.

3. Turning up the radio, opening the window, or turning on the air conditioner are effective ways to stay awake when driving. These "aids" are ineffective and can be dangerous to the person who is driving while feeling drowsy or sleepy. If you're feeling tired while driving, the best thing to do is to pull off the road in a safe rest area and take a nap for 15-45 minutes. Caffeinated beverages can help overcome drowsiness for a short period of time. However, it takes about 30 minutes before the effects are felt. The best prevention for drowsy driving is a good night's sleep the night before your trip.

4. Daytime sleepiness always means a person isn't getting enough sleep. Excessive daytime sleepiness is a condition in which an individual feels very drowsy during the day and has an urge to fall asleep when he/she should be fully alert and awake. The condition, which can occur even after getting enough nighttime sleep, can be a sign of an underlying medical condition or sleep disorder such as narcolepsy or sleep apnea. These problems can often be treated, and symptoms should be discussed with a physician. Daytime sleepiness can be dangerous and puts a person at risk for drowsy driving, injury, and illness and can impair mental abilities, emotions, and performance.

5. Health problems such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and depression are unrelated to the amount and quality of a person's sleep. Studies have found a relationship between the quantity and quality of one's sleep and many health problems. For example, insufficient sleep affects growth hormone secretion that is linked to obesity; as the amount of hormone secretion decreases, the chance for weight gain increases. Blood pressure usually falls during the sleep cycle, however, interrupted sleep can adversely affect this normal decline, leading to hypertension and cardiovascular problems. Research has also shown that insufficient sleep impairs the body's ability to use insulin, which can lead to the onset of diabetes. More and more

scientific studies are showing correlations between poor and insufficient sleep and disease.

6. The older you get, the fewer hours of sleep you need. Sleep experts recommend a range of seven to nine hours of sleep for the average adult. While sleep patterns change as we age, the amount of sleep we need generally does not. Older people may wake more frequently through the night and may actually get less nighttime sleep, but their sleep need is no less than younger adults. Because they may sleep less during the night, older people tend to sleep more during the day. Naps planned as part of a regular daily routine can be useful in promoting wakefulness after the person awakens.

7. During sleep, your brain rests. The body rests during sleep, however, the brain remains active, gets "recharged," and still controls many body functions including breathing. When we sleep, we typically drift between two sleep states, REM (rapid eye movement) and non-REM, in 90-minute cycles. Non-REM sleep has four stages with distinct features, ranging from stage one drowsiness, when one can be easily awakened, to "deep sleep" stages three and four, when awakenings are more difficult and where the most positive and restorative effects of sleep occur. However, even in the deepest non-REM sleep, our minds can still process information. REM sleep is an active sleep where dreams occur, breathing and heart rate increase and become irregular, muscles relax and eyes move back and forth under the eyelids.

Benefits of EMDR

A series of video stores about the value and benefits of EMDR can be found by googling "scoopit" then "EMDR"

Net News

Here are some web sites you & your family may find helpful:

Search: 10 of the best yoga poses for sleep

Search: Innovative Therapy Helps Minnesotans Recover from Trauma

Search: The one thing these crazy successful people do every morning

Search: Can Meditation Change Compassionate Behavior?

Search: Mindfulness Meditation Training Changes Brain Structure in Eight Weeks

Self-Help Corner:

City of Edmonton Community Resources: 211
Catholic Social Services: 780-471-1122
Support Network / Distress Line: 780-482-HELP
Kids Help Line: 1-800-668-6868