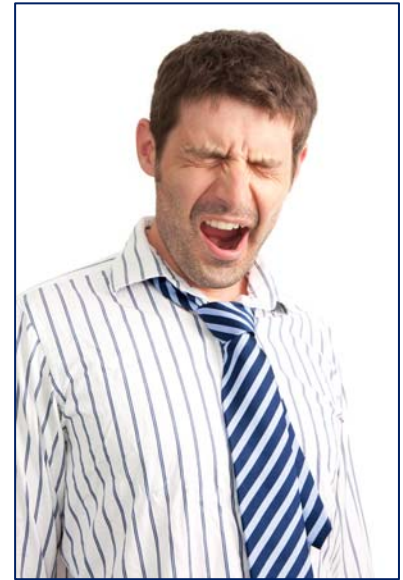


Understanding the Importance of Sleep

Sleep is a major part of our lives. It is estimated that we spend about one-third of our lives sleeping. Adequate sleep is a necessary and important component of a healthy lifestyle. Getting quality sleep during the night is related to our ability to function during the day.

Most adults need 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night to feel rested and ready to tackle the day. Often adults do not get enough sleep because of the many other things they have to do on a daily basis (e.g., taking care of children and family members, working, running errands, exercising, maintaining the household, etc.). Getting fewer than 7 hours of sleep or experiencing interrupted sleep may lead to decreased energy, feelings of fatigue, difficulty with concentration, moodiness, and a weakened immune system. Getting poor sleep also may contribute to bad eating habits, weight gain, and memory impairment.

There are differences in how much sleep each individual needs. The amount of sleep you need may depend on your age, activity level, and even genetics. If you feel sleepy and drowsy during the day, these may be signs that you are not sleeping well during the night.



How does sleep affect the brain and cognition?

Research has demonstrated that sleep has positive effects on several forms of processing in the brain including motor skills, learning new information, multitasking, and gaining insight. Other findings suggest that the brain is better able to form memories during sleep.

If you do not get enough sleep, not only is it harder for your brain to strengthen the memories you've made but the rates of errors you might make at work may increase because you are tired and unable to pay attention to all of the requirements of your job. Poor sleep also increases your risk of making careless decisions while driving and may impact your reaction time in critical situations.

Our research has shown that childhood cancer survivors may be especially vulnerable to the impact of poor sleep and fatigue on cognition.



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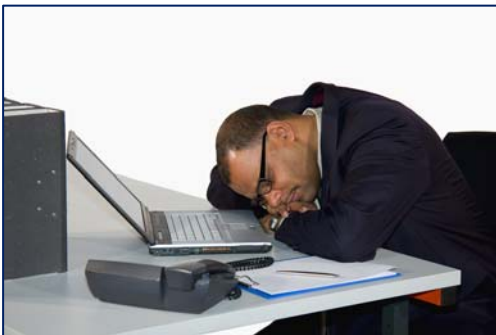
Simple Ways to Improve Your Sleep

Good sleep habits are essential to getting a good night's sleep. Making small changes to your sleeping environment and behavior can help you sleep better and feel more refreshed during the day.

- **Establish a good bedtime routine.** Try to go to bed at the same time each night and plan to leave at least 7 hours for sleep. For example, if you know that you have to wake up at 5:30 in the morning to get ready for the day and that it often takes you 30 minutes to fall asleep, then you will need to be in bed by 10pm.



- **Make sure your bedroom is a comfortable temperature and dark.** If your body is too cold or hot it can interfere with your ability to fall asleep and may cause you to wake up during the night. Sleeping with the lights or television on can effect your sleep quality. If you fall asleep with the television on, set a timer so that it will turn off shortly after you fall asleep.
- **Only use your bed for sleeping.** Do not read, study, or watch television in your bed. Avoid falling asleep on the couch or in any room other than your bedroom.



- **Try not to nap during the day.** This will help ensure that you will be tired at bedtime. If you must nap, try to make it shorter than 30 minutes and avoid napping late in the afternoon. Taking a nap late in the afternoon will make it more difficult for you to fall asleep at your regular bedtime. All sleeping should be done in your bed, including naps.
- **Eat dinner several hours before you go to bed.** If you eat too late in the evening, digestion may interfere with your sleep. Try to avoid excessive drinking in the evening. Drinking too much fluid at night may cause you to wake up to use the bathroom.
- **Exercise and spend time outdoors.** Increasing your physical activity during the day may have a positive impact on your ability to fall and stay asleep. Sunlight has a strong effect on our sleep-wake cycles. Spending time outdoors each day may help improve your sleep patterns. Always use sunscreen when spending time outdoors.



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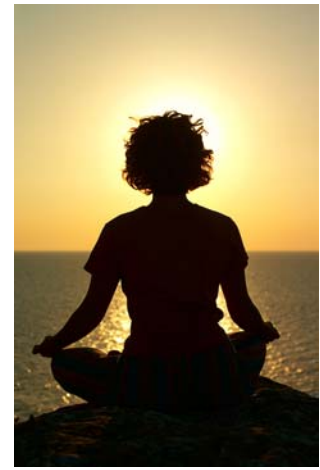
Simple Ways to Improve Your Sleep

Avoid drinking alcohol several hours before bedtime. Although it may help you fall asleep initially, alcohol causes light sleep and awakenings later in the night. This can result in a poor night of sleep and may lead to daytime fatigue.

Caffeine late in the day. Caffeine is a stimulant that interferes with your ability to fall asleep. Caffeine is found in many products including soft drinks, coffee, energy drinks, and chocolate.

Smoking. Nicotine found in cigarettes and other tobacco products is a stimulant and can cause difficulties falling asleep. If you wake up in the middle of the night do not smoke.

- **Do something relaxing before you go to bed.** This may include reading a book, taking a hot shower or bath, listening to soft music, or meditating. Try to avoid physically stimulating activities such as exercising close to your established bedtime.
- **Keep a notebook by your bedside.** If you find yourself awake and worrying about tasks you need to complete, consider keeping a notebook by your bedside and write yourself a list so that you won't forget. Knowing you have a list written down will help your mind to be at ease which will make falling asleep easier.



- **Do not watch the clock.** If you have difficulty falling asleep turn your clock around so that you cannot see the time. Watching the time while you are trying to fall asleep does not help you relax and can lead to feelings of frustration.
- **Only go to bed when sleepy.** Do not force yourself to stay in bed for long periods of time if you cannot sleep. Try to engage in a relaxing activity and return to bed only when you are tired and ready to sleep.
- **Maintain a regular waketime.** Try to wake up at the same time every morning, even on the weekends. This will help your body develop a consistent sleep-wake cycle.

NEXT STEPS

- If you have trouble falling asleep and you have tried techniques such as implementing a consistent bedtime and making sure not to nap during the day, it may be time to consult your doctor about your difficulty falling asleep. This is especially important if you notice that feelings of fatigue and sleepiness are impacting your ability to complete daily tasks. Medical professionals can recommend different strategies including dietary changes, changes to your environment, ways to treat snoring, or supplements that help with sleep.

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