

In Good Health

ACM JIF WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

Newsletter Created By:
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Q3 2023

SLEEP & YOUR HEALTH



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The Significance of Quality Sleep for Overall Health and Well-Being

SLEEP IS THE FOUNDATION FOR GOOD HEALTH

- Sleep is more than just a time for your body and mind to rest. In fact, while you're asleep, your body remains active. During this time, your body rebuilds muscles you've worn down during the day and removes toxins in the brain that accumulate while you're awake. It's also essential for keeping your memories intact.
- Sleep is likewise vital in helping you regulate your emotions. Being sleep deprived for just one night can increase your emotional response to negative feelings by 60%.
- Furthermore, sleep deprivation can affect your body's ability to regulate essential functions like appetite control, your immune system, metabolism, and body weight.
- Lastly, sleep plays a vital role in maintaining your circadian rhythm or internal clock.
- Your inner biological clock runs on an approximately 24-hour schedule controlling the sleep-wake cycle. It may also influence your metabolism, inflammation, and how you respond to stress

NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF POOR SLEEP

It's estimated that about one-third of adults and two-thirds of high school students don't get enough sleep each night.

- If you're sleep deprived, you may engage in poor decision-making, be less creative, and have an increased risk of motor vehicle accidents.
- One study found that getting only 5 hours per night for 4 nights in a row negatively affected mental performance to the same extent as having a blood alcohol content of 0.06. As if that wasn't enough, poor sleep can lead to negative moods, less productivity, and unseemly behavior at work.
- Even worse, getting poor quality or not enough sleep can increase your chances of developing chronic diseases like diabetes, obesity, and heart disease.
- And because it's the time when your body clears waste from the brain, it may be the reason why poor sleep seems to be associated with an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease.



Recommended Amount of Sleep for Adults

Everyone has unique needs and preferences, and individual sleep requirements are no different. Nevertheless, the amount of sleep you need per night is primarily determined by your age.

OFFICIAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SLEEP DURATION

Broken down by age group:

- Older adults (65+): 7–8 hours
- Adults (18–64 years): 7–9 hours
- Teenagers (14–17 years): 8–10 hours
- School children (6–13 years): 9–11 hours
- Preschoolers (3–5 years): 10–13 hours (including naps)
- Toddlers (1–2 years): 11–14 hours (including naps)
- Infants (4–12 months): 12–15 hours (including naps)
- Newborns (0–3 months): 14–17 hours

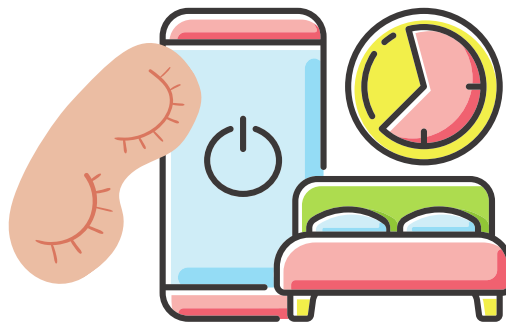
OTHER FACTORS DETERMINING SLEEP NEEDS

- **GENETIC MAKEUP:** Your genetics are a determining factor in how many hours of sleep you need per night. Some genetic mutations can affect how long you need to sleep, what time of day you prefer to sleep, and how you respond to sleep deprivation. However, your genetic makeup isn't something you can change, and there's no practical way to know whether you carry one of these mutations. Therefore, it's essential to pay attention to how you feel to determine whether you're getting the right amount of sleep.
- **SLEEP QUALITY:** The quality of your sleep can also affect how much you need. If your sleep quality is poor, you may find that you still feel tired after getting what should be considered enough. Conversely, if you're getting good quality sleep, you may manage better with a little less. Studies have found that short sleep duration and poor sleep quality are responsible for many adverse sleep-related effects.

Practical Strategies to Improve Sleep Hygiene

SLEEP HYGIENE TIPS:

- **Follow a regular schedule:** Going to bed at the same time each night helps regulate your inner clock. Following an irregular sleep schedule has been linked to poor sleep quality and duration.
- **Create a calming bedtime routine:** Adopting a relaxing routine before bed can help you get in the mood to sleep. For example, listening to music has been shown to help improve sleep.
- **Create a comfortable environment:** Sleeping in a quiet, dark room at a comfortable temperature can help you sleep better. Being too active before bed, too warm, or in a noisy environment is linked to poor sleep.
- **Minimize caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine:** Studies have linked caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine use to poorer sleep quality. Try to avoid caffeine in the afternoon and evening.
- **Reduce your use of electronics:** The excessive use of cell phones and electronics has been associated with poor sleep quality. Even exposure to bright room lights before bed may negatively affect your sleep.
- **Be more active:** Studies have shown that being inactive is associated with poorer sleep, and conversely, getting exercise during the day may help you sleep better at night.
- **Practice meditation:** Meditation and relaxation training may improve sleep quality and brain function, although the research isn't clear.





sleep hygiene

What is Sleep Hygiene?



'Sleep hygiene' is the term used to describe good sleep habits. Considerable research has gone into developing a set of guidelines and tips which are designed to enhance good sleeping, and there is much evidence to suggest that these strategies can provide long-term solutions to sleep difficulties.

There are many medications which are used to treat insomnia, but these tend to be only effective in the short-term. Ongoing use of sleeping pills may lead to dependence and interfere with developing good sleep habits independent of medication, thereby prolonging sleep difficulties. Talk to your health professional about what is right for you, but we recommend good sleep hygiene as an important part of treating insomnia, either with other strategies such as medication or cognitive therapy or alone.

Sleep Hygiene Tips

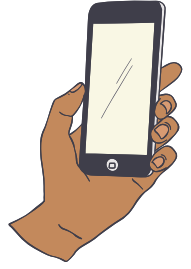
- 1) **Get regular.** One of the best ways to train your body to sleep well is to go to bed and get up at more or less the same time every day, even on weekends and days off! This regular rhythm will make you feel better and will give your body something to work from.
- 2) **Sleep when sleepy.** Only try to sleep when you actually feel tired or sleepy, rather than spending too much time awake in bed.
- 3) **Get up & try again.** If you haven't been able to get to sleep after about 20 minutes or more, get up and do something calming or boring until you feel sleepy, then return to bed and try again. Sit quietly on the couch with the lights off (bright light will tell your brain that it is time to wake up), or read something boring like the phone book. Avoid doing anything that is too stimulating or interesting, as this will wake you up even more.
- 4) **Avoid caffeine & nicotine.** It is best to avoid consuming any caffeine (in coffee, tea, cola drinks, chocolate, and some medications) or nicotine (cigarettes) for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed. These substances act as stimulants and interfere with the ability to fall asleep.
- 5) **Avoid alcohol.** It is also best to avoid alcohol for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed. Many people believe that alcohol is relaxing and helps them to get to sleep at first, but it actually interrupts the quality of sleep.
- 6) **Bed is for sleeping.** Try not to use your bed for anything other than sleeping and sex, so that your body comes to associate bed with sleep. If you use bed as a place to watch TV, eat, read, work on your laptop, pay bills, and other things, your body will not learn this connection.



- 7) **No naps.** It is best to avoid taking naps during the day, to make sure that you are tired at bedtime. If you can't make it through the day without a nap, make sure it is for less than an hour and before 3pm.
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- 8) **Sleep rituals.** You can develop your own rituals of things to remind your body that it is time to sleep - some people find it useful to do relaxing stretches or breathing exercises for 15 minutes before bed each night, or sit calmly with a cup of caffeine-free tea.
 - 9) **Bathtime.** Having a hot bath 1-2 hours before bedtime can be useful, as it will raise your body temperature, causing you to feel sleepy as your body temperature drops again. Research shows that sleepiness is associated with a drop in body temperature.
 - 10) **No clock-watching.** Many people who struggle with sleep tend to watch the clock too much. Frequently checking the clock during the night can wake you up (especially if you turn on the light to read the time) and reinforces negative thoughts such as "Oh no, look how late it is, I'll never get to sleep" or "it's so early, I have only slept for 5 hours, this is terrible."
 - 11) **Use a sleep diary.** This worksheet can be a useful way of making sure you have the right facts about your sleep, rather than making assumptions. Because a diary involves watching the clock (see point 10) it is a good idea to only use it for two weeks to get an idea of what is going and then perhaps two months down the track to see how you are progressing.
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- 12) **Exercise.** Regular exercise is a good idea to help with good sleep, but try not to do strenuous exercise in the 4 hours before bedtime. Morning walks are a great way to start the day feeling refreshed!
 - 13) **Eat right.** A healthy, balanced diet will help you to sleep well, but timing is important. Some people find that a very empty stomach at bedtime is distracting, so it can be useful to have a light snack, but a heavy meal soon before bed can also interrupt sleep. Some people recommend a warm glass of milk, which contains tryptophan, which acts as a natural sleep inducer.
 - 14) **The right space.** It is very important that your bed and bedroom are quiet and comfortable for sleeping. A cooler room with enough blankets to stay warm is best, and make sure you have curtains or an eyemask to block out early morning light and earplugs if there is noise outside your room.
 - 15) **Keep daytime routine the same.** Even if you have a bad night sleep and are tired it is important that you try to keep your daytime activities the same as you had planned. That is, don't avoid activities because you feel tired. This can reinforce the insomnia.

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Minimize Exposure to Electronic Devices and Blue Light



SUGGESTIONS ON MINIMIZING EXPOSURE TO ELECTRONIC DEVICES AND BLUE LIGHT BEFORE BED TO PROMOTE BETTER SLEEP

- **Establish a Digital Curfew:** Set a specific time before bed when you will stop using electronic devices. Aim to have at least 1-2 hours of device-free time before you sleep.
- **Use Night Mode or Blue Light Filters:** Most devices have a night mode or blue light filter feature that reduces the amount of blue light emitted. Enable these features on your devices, or consider using apps or software that adjust the screen's color temperature.
- **Avoid Electronic Devices in the Bedroom:** Make your bedroom a technology-free zone. Keep electronic devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops out of the bedroom to create a sleep-friendly environment.
- **Replace Screen Time with Relaxing Activities:** Instead of using electronic devices before bed, engage in calming activities that promote relaxation. Read a book, listen to soothing music, practice gentle stretching, or enjoy a warm bath.
- **Dim the Lights:** Lower the overall lighting in your environment as bedtime approaches. Dimming the lights signals to your body that it's time to wind down and prepares it for sleep.
- **Use Blue Light Blocking Glasses:** Consider wearing blue light blocking glasses in the evening, especially if you can't avoid electronic device use. These glasses filter out blue light and can help reduce its disruptive effects on your sleep.
- **Opt for Wind-Down Routines:** Establish a relaxing wind-down routine before bed that doesn't involve screens. This can include activities like journaling, practicing mindfulness or meditation, or enjoying a cup of caffeine-free herbal tea.

Remember, the goal is to limit exposure to electronic devices and blue light before bed to allow your body to prepare for sleep naturally. By implementing these suggestions, you can help create a healthier sleep routine and improve the quality of your sleep.

The Reciprocal Relationship Between Sleep and Mental Health

Sleep and mental health are closely interconnected, and disturbances in sleep patterns can significantly contribute to the development or exacerbation of anxiety and depression. Here's an exploration of the reciprocal relationship between sleep and mental health:

1. IMPACT OF SLEEP ON ANXIETY:

- Lack of quality sleep can increase anxiety levels. When individuals don't get enough sleep, their brain becomes more reactive to negative emotional stimuli, leading to heightened anxiety.
- Sleep deprivation affects the amygdala, a part of the brain involved in processing emotions, making it more sensitive and reactive. This can result in increased feelings of fear, worry, and a heightened stress response.
- Sleep disturbances also disrupt the regulation of stress hormones, such as cortisol, which can further contribute to anxiety symptoms.

2. IMPACT OF SLEEP ON DEPRESSION:

- Sleep problems are common in individuals with depression, and the relationship between the two is bidirectional.
- Insomnia, characterized by difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, is a common symptom of depression. Sleep disturbances can be an early warning sign of depression or contribute to its development.
- Disrupted sleep can negatively impact mood regulation, making it more difficult for individuals to regulate their emotions and maintain a positive outlook.
- Sleep deprivation affects serotonin, a neurotransmitter involved in mood regulation. Insufficient sleep can lead to lower serotonin levels, which is often associated with depression.

The Reciprocal Relationship Between Sleep and Mental Health (contd.)

3. VICIOUS CYCLE: SLEEP & MENTAL HEALTH:

- Sleep disturbances and mental health conditions can create a vicious cycle, each negatively impacting the other.
- Anxiety or depression can lead to difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or experiencing restful sleep due to intrusive thoughts, rumination, or physical discomfort.
- On the other hand, insufficient or poor-quality sleep can worsen anxiety and depression symptoms, leading to a cycle of sleeplessness and deteriorating mental health.

2. IMPORTANCE OF ADDRESSING SLEEP FOR MENTAL HEALTH:

- Recognizing and addressing sleep problems is crucial in the management and treatment of anxiety and depression.
- Improving sleep hygiene, implementing relaxation techniques, and seeking professional help for sleep disorders can alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- Treating sleep disturbances can enhance the effectiveness of mental health interventions, as better sleep promotes emotional regulation, cognitive function, and overall well-being.

By understanding the reciprocal relationship between sleep and mental health, individuals can prioritize and improve their sleep patterns as part of their overall mental health care. Encouraging employees to seek professional guidance when experiencing sleep difficulties can be valuable in fostering better mental health outcomes.



Shiftwork: Challenges and Managing Risks

Shiftwork challenges people to work and sleep in opposition to their circadian rhythm, also known as the body clock. Sleeping during the day often reduces both the quantity and quality of sleep. Working at night requires pushing past fatigue to remain alert and vigilant when the body wants to be asleep.

Shift workers often struggle to get enough sleep – and they must remain alert when their bodies are telling them to sleep.

Shift workers are at risk

Those most at risk are night shift workers and those who work consecutive shifts.

- Fatigue-related safety risks increase during night shifts, especially between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m.
- Studies show the risk of injury or accident on the night shift is 30% higher compared to day shift
- Working multiple nights in a row increases risks as employees build up a sleep debt
- Risks are 36% higher on the fourth consecutive night shift compared to the first
- Employees on afternoon shifts or with early morning start times also suffer from sleep loss

Managing risks

Both employees and employers can help reduce the risks of shiftwork.

Employers

- Forward-rotate shifts, day to afternoon to night, while providing additional time for rest between shifts
- Limit the number of consecutive night shifts
- Slowly rotate shifts to reduce the impact on sleep schedules, the Panama shift schedule is a good example
- Educate employees on sleep health, and encourage them to consult their doctor if they suspect they have a sleep disorder

Employees

- Make it a priority to sleep 7 to 9 hours every day (naps count, too!)
- Take a two-hour nap prior to the start of a night shift
- Learn about healthy sleep and ways to improve sleep health
- Get screened for a sleep disorder
- During a night shift, seek bright lighting to increase alertness
- Break up tedious tasks with physical activity such as short walks
- Take chat breaks with co-workers to boost mental alertness
- Caffeine can be beneficial for short-term alertness, but should not replace sleep or be used too close to the end of a night shift or it can interrupt sleep