

# The Importance of “Catching Your Zzzz’s”

*Why Getting Enough Sleep is Important for Your Health*



[https://www.spd.org.sg/are\\_you\\_getting\\_quality\\_sleep/](https://www.spd.org.sg/are_you_getting_quality_sleep/)

## How Sleep Works

**When you sleep your body goes into two different sleep cycles:**

Rapid eye movement (REM) sleep – when dreaming commonly occurs

Non-REM sleep (“deep sleep”)

Generally, we cycle through these states 3-5 times per night; It’s important to get enough of both types of sleep by allowing adequate hours of continual rest.

*Recommendations: 7-8 hours per 24-hour period for adults 18 years & older*

Sleep loss can add up; naps can help provide a short-term boost in alertness & performance but doesn’t provide all of the benefits of night-time sleep

## Why is Sleep Important?

- Getting adequate sleep the first night after learning a new skill is important for improving memory & performance
- Sleep provides an opportunity for the body to repair & rejuvenate itself allowing for muscle growth & tissue repair (e.g. involved in healing & repair of heart & blood vessels).
- More benefits include: protein synthesis, release of growth hormones & peak cognitive performance (while sleeping, your brain is preparing for the next day, forming new pathways/connections in the brain that help enhance learning & problem-solving skills).
- Adequate sleep has also been shown to improve people’s attention spans, decision-making capabilities & boost creativity.



<https://www.shutterstock.com/search/sleeping+lamb>

### **Additional Resources About Sleep:**

Videos: Why Sleep Matters; Consequences of Insufficient Sleep

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/alicegwalton/2016/12/09/7-ways-sleep-affects-the-brain-and-what-happens-if-it-doesnt-get-enough/#55503d68753c>

National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute: Your Guide to Healthy Sleep  
[https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/sleep/healthy\\_sleep.pdf](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/sleep/healthy_sleep.pdf)

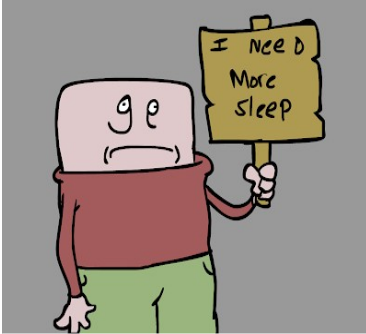
## Sleep Deprivation Can Lead To:

### Cognitive Issues

- Decreased ability to learn & perform tasks adequately by altering brain activity
- May lead to difficulty with decision making, problem-solving, controlling emotions & behavior and coping with change
- Longer time completing tasks, slower reaction times, increased mistakes

### Disease States linked with prolonged inadequate sleep (increased risk for developing):

- Diabetes mellitus (impaired processing of blood glucose)
- Hypertension
- Heart disease
- Kidney disease
- Stroke
- Overweight & obesity (lower leptin "satiety hormone" & increased ghrelin "hunger hormone")
- More likely to "crave junk foods" because body is signaling that it needs a quick energy boost



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### Increased Stress

- Cortisol production "stress hormone" and inflammation increase
- Sleep deprivation is correlated with long-term mood disorders (depression, anxiety, declines in optimism & sociability – difficulty judging other people's emotions & reactions)
- It can be associated with increased risk-taking behaviors and risk of injury of self or others (e.g. accident/falls)
- Sleep deprivation is also linked with lower life expectancy and a compromised immune system

## How to Improve Sleep:

### Stick to a routine

Strive to go to bed & wake up at same time every day (on weekends try keeping similar sleep schedule, changing it by no more than an hour)

### Try not to eat a heavy or large meal within a couple of hours prior to bed

If hungry – a light, healthy snack is okay: e.g. low fat/sugar Greek yogurt or 1 oz unsalted nuts or low-fat cheese stick)

### Practice relaxation techniques before bed

Take a hot bath, slow stretches, meditation or listen to soothing music. Some people benefit from incorporating white noise (constant background noise like a fan or recordings of rain, the tide, nature sounds)

### Incorporate physical activity into daily life

Active people often experience better quality sleep.

### Keep bedroom quiet, dark, and cool

(ideal sleep temperature = 60-67 degrees Fahrenheit)

### Avoid alcohol before bed

Alcohol initially acts as a sedative but after few hours can stimulate parts of brain that cause arousal, leading to periods of being awake later during the night.

### Avoid bright, artificial light one hour before bed

(e.g. television, phone, computer, bright alarm clock)

It can signal your brain that it's time to be awake.

**Note:** Talk with your Doctor if you routinely sleep more than 8 hours a night but do not feel rested.

### Limit lengthy naps

If you feel the need to nap, keep it to 20 minutes, any longer can take away from quality sleep at night.

### Refrain from nicotine & caffeine

Both act as stimulants & can interfere with sleep. In some people, the effects of caffeine can last up to 8 hours so an afternoon cup of coffee might interfere with that night's sleep.

**Note:** More is not always better. Chronically sleeping over 9 hours per night has been shown in some research to be associated with poor health)

### Sleep Strategies for Shift Workers

- Limit caffeine consumption to beginning of shift
- Keep lights bright at work
- Take naps and try to arrange schedule to maximize uninterrupted sleep
- Limit changing shift hours frequently to avoid impacting your body clock
- Keep bedroom quiet and dark during daylight sleep hours

#### Resources:

"Why Do We Sleep, Anyway?" Why Do We Sleep, Anyway? | Healthy Sleep, [healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/benefits-of-sleep/why-do-we-sleep](https://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/benefits-of-sleep/why-do-we-sleep).

"Sleep Organization: American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM)." American Academy of Sleep Medicine – Association for Sleep Clinicians and Researchers, 20 Oct. 2019, [aasm.org/](https://aasm.org/).

"National Sleep Foundation." National Sleep Foundation, [www.sleepfoundation.org/](https://www.sleepfoundation.org/).