

How Much Sleep is Enough?



University Services

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One of the most important processes of life is also one of the most overlooked. Sleep is necessary for survival, good health, and renewing your mental and physical health each day. Unfortunately, 74 percent of American adults are experiencing a sleep problem a few nights a week or more. 39 percent of adults get less than 7 hours of sleep each week night, and more than one in three are so sleepy during the day that it interferes with daily activities.

Over the past century we have reduced our average sleep time significantly. Although the times and our society have changed, our brains and bodies have not. Sleep deprivation is affecting us all and we are paying the price.

SLEEP NEEDS OVER THE LIFE CYCLE	
Infants/Babies*	
0-2 months	10.5-18.5 hours
2-12 months	14-15 hours
Toddlers/Children*	
12-18 months	13-15 hours
18 months- 3 years	12-14 hours
3-5 years	11-13 hours
5-12 years	9-11 hours
Adolescents	8.5-9.5 hours
Adults	7-9 hours

* Total time includes naps

Tips For Good Sleep

- Tobacco can endanger your health and should not be used.
- Avoid caffeine and nicotine close to bed time.
- Do not go to bed too full or too hungry.
- Maintain a regular sleep and wake time everyday, even weekends.
- Exercise regularly, but complete your workout at least 3 hours before bedtime.
- Establish a regular relaxing, not alerting, bedtime routine (e.g. taking a bath).
- Create a sleep-conducive environment that is dark, quiet and preferably cool and comfortable.

Talk About Your Sleep With Your Health Care Professional

Sleep/ Waking Disorders

There are 88 recognized disorders of sleep. Some keep you awake, some disrupt your sleep, and others can make you fall asleep almost instantly, whether you want to or not.

Here are a few of the most common disorders:

Insomnia is the most encountered sleep disorder, occurring in 20 to 33 percent of the population, with the highest reports generally from females, the elderly, and shift workers. Insomnia can express itself as the inability to fall asleep or to stay asleep. It can be acute, lasting one to several nights; or chronic, lasting months to years. More often, people experience chronic-intermittent insomnia, which is difficulty sleeping for a few nights followed by a few nights of adequate sleep before the problem returns. Stress, depression, Anxiety, Illness, or a sleeping pill habit are all possible causes of insomnia.

Symptoms that can result from this include:

- Difficulty falling asleep
- Waking too early
- Waking and being unable to fall back asleep
- Waking up feeling un-refreshed
- Frequent awakenings during the night

Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) often appears in otherwise healthy people. It is described by many people as an unpleasant “creepy crawly “ sensation that occurs in the legs when they are sitting or lying still. The constant need to stretch or move the legs to get rid of RLS sensations often prevents a person from falling asleep. As a result, the person will be extremely tired during the day and unable to perform everyday duties. As of now there is no known cause of RLS.

Narcolepsy is typified by the inability to stay awake when you should normally. Typically, a person with narcolepsy suffers sleep attacks as well as a continual sleepiness feeling that is never completely relieved by any amount of sleep. Laughing, crying and other strong emotions occasionally bring on attacks. This condition often goes undiagnosed for years yet can be significant or even disabling to a person’s life.

Symptoms that can result from this include:

- Excessive daytime sleepiness
- Cataplexy (sudden loss of strength in the muscles)
- Sleep paralysis
- Sudden sleep attacks
- Dream-like hallucinations

Sleep Apnea a breathing disorder that is usually associated with loud or heavy snoring interrupted by pauses and gasps. During Apnea, blood oxygen is reduced to the entire body, sometimes producing serious irregular heart beats and significantly reduced oxygen to the brain.

Reduced muscle tone in the throat from things such as enlarged tonsils or being over weight can cause sleep apnea.

Symptoms that can result from this include:

- Decreased ability to concentrate
- Loss of energy and/or fatigue
- Mild to marked depression
- Morning headaches
- Forgetfulness
- Anxiety
- Decreased interest in sexual activity

Important Sleep Information to Share with Your Doctor

- You snore most nights — and how loudly
- You experience or have been told that you gasp for breath or stop breathing during sleep
- You feel sleepy during the day
- You fall asleep when reading, watching TV or are engaged in daily activities
- You fell asleep or dozed off when driving or while at work or school
- You have difficulty falling or staying asleep — and how often
- You wake up often feeling tired and not rested
- The number of hours you usually sleep each night
- You often have disruptions to your sleep You are taking any sleeping pills or other treatments to help you sleep better
- List of medications or supplements you are taking
- You use alcohol or smoke regularly
- The time of day you use caffeine products, exercise and eat your last meal
- You experience nighttime heartburn, pain or the need to urinate
- Your level of stress and whether you have experienced lifestyle changes recently
- You are a night or rotating shift-worker



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