

SLEEP

News and Views

Information about sleep, sleep disorders and how to get a better night's sleep.

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Why sleep should be on your list of New Year's resolutions

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If 2020 has taught us anything, it is to value our health. Experts have been reminding us how important it is to eat well and to exercise. They have also been expounding upon about the importance of sleep on our overall health and well-being. There is a reason for this – sleep is essential for every organ system and impacts us in specific ways. Here are some of the areas of your health most influenced by the quality of sleep you achieve.

Immune System: we have known that sleep is important for our immune system for years. There was a study in 2015 that showed us that we are more likely to get sick if we don't get enough sleep. In this study, a group of volunteers wore devices that recorded how much sleep they obtained for 7 days. They then took nasal drops that contained rhinovirus, the virus that causes the common cold. They were quarantined and monitored to see if they developed a cold. Researchers found that those who slept under 5 hours were more likely to develop a cold than those who slept for greater than 8 hours.

Skin: Estee Lauder and Case Medical Center in Cleveland, OH did a study on the impact of poor sleep on skin. They had skin experts evaluate the skin of volunteers (pre-menopausal women 30-49 years of age) using their clinical skills and various devices that measured signs of aging such as fine lines, uneven pigmentation, and reduced elasticity. They found that people who

slept better appeared to be more youthful and their skin recovered from sun damage 30 % faster than poor sleepers. Incidentally, they also noted that poor sleepers also had a higher BMI.

Weight: We have long known that there is a relationship between sleep and our weight. We have all experienced the hunger we feel after an all-nighter. As it turns out, our appetite is regulated by two hormones; leptin and ghrelin. These control hunger and satiety. When we don't get enough sleep or have an untreated sleep disorder, we have more ghrelin. As a result, we don't get full and want to keep eating. This leads to weight gain. When we sleep better, these hormones normalize and allow us to feel full with less food.

Athletic performance: Every year we swear to become more active and get into shape. We know that cardio training alone isn't enough. When we look at our athletes, they understand how important sleep is to help them achieve their optimal performance. Many athletic coaches would rather have their athletes sleep more the night before an important game than get in an extra practice session. Sleep helps to repair muscles and improves endurance. A study on basketball players shows that those who sleep an extra two hours a night are more likely to do higher-intensity workouts like weights, running or biking. They have faster reaction times and reflexes. Poor sleep the night before a

competition was an independent risk factor for losing the game. Accuracy decreased in collegiate tennis players if they didn't get enough shut-eye.

Mood: We have seen an uptick in mental health disorders during the pandemic. Undeniably, 2020 has been a year unlike any other. Along with our stresses about our health, jobs, and finances, we are also isolated and have less access to the things that allow us to manage our stress outside of pandemic life. Sleep impacts mood as well. REM sleep is important for mood stabilization. Insufficient sleep is associated with anxiety and depression and is a known trigger for bipolar disorder.

Libido: Sleep apnea can lead to erectile dysfunction in men and reduced sexual desire in women. Although it is sometimes uncomfortable to talk about, poor sleep may be playing a role in your sexual health. We all know how desire can vanish if we are sleep-deprived, especially those with young children. Even after the kids have grown up and we are able to get enough sleep, an underlying sleep disorder like sleep apnea can still impact our sex lives.

These are just a few of the ways sleep impacts your health. In 2021, let's resolve to sleep better. This means that we must allow adequate time for sleep, put away our devices, incorporate a wind down routine, and make sleep a priority.



Sleep Hygiene TIPS

Stick to a sleep schedule: Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends, holidays, and days off. Being consistent reinforces the body's sleep-wake cycle and helps promote better sleep.

Pay attention to food and beverage choices: Don't go to bed either hungry or stuffed. Discomfort can affect the ability to fall asleep. Nicotine, caffeine, and alcohol affect the quality of sleep.

Create a bedtime ritual: Do the same things each night to tell the body it's time to wind down. Relaxing activities with the lights dimmed can promote better sleep by easing the transition between wakefulness and drowsiness. Avoid electronic devices, including TV, as research suggests it interferes with sleep.

Get comfortable: Create a room ideal for sleeping. This often means cool, dark, and quiet. Consider using room-darkening shades, earplugs, or a fan if needed. If sharing a bed, make sure

there's enough room for two. Set limits on how often children or pets share the bed.

Limit daytime naps: Long daytime naps can interfere with nighttime sleep—especially if struggling with insomnia or poor sleep quality at night. Limit naps to 10-30 minutes during mid-afternoon. If working nights, make an exception to these rules and keep the sunlight out using room darkening shades to promote quality daytime sleep.

Include physical activity daily: Regular physical activity can promote better sleep, helping to promote falling asleep faster and enjoying deeper sleep.

Manage stress: When there is too much to do & too much to think about, sleep is likely to suffer. Consider getting organized, setting priorities, & delegating tasks. Take a break when needed, share a good laugh & before bed write down all thoughts and set them aside for tomorrow.

10 Sleep-inducing items for your bedroom

- 1 **Sound Machines**
White noise, metronome, nature and water sounds are among the options
- 2 **Lighted clocks**
Sunset and sunrise programs can be customized for length and brightness
- 3 **Sheets**
Cooling, heat retaining, bamboo, moisture wicking and the list goes on...
- 4 **Noise cancelling**
Earbuds and headphones that really work
- 5 **Mattress**
Introducing smart beds—adjustable, cooling or heating and complete with sleep tracking
- 6 **Screen-time monitor**
Scheduled shut-off times keep screen-time in check
- 7 **Sleep Trackers**
Trackers can monitor snoring and disrupted sleep
- 8 **Blue-light blocking**
Eye glasses, tablet and phone settings for blue-light free screen-time
- 9 **Pillows**
Cooling, memory foam, bamboo, and latex are among the seemingly endless options.
- 10 **Weighted Blankets**
Choose a weighted blanket that is 5-10% of your body weight. Kids blankets should range from 3-8 lbs.

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