



DAY IN DAY OUT

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

SOLID STRATEGIES FOR SOUND SLUMBER

You know that sleep is an important element to your health. But, do you know exactly how important it is? Sleep is actually as important for good health as diet and exercise. And good sleep is critical to your brain performance, mood, and overall health. For example, sleep helps prepare your brain to learn, remember, and create. Everything from blood vessels to the immune system uses sleep as a time for repair. There are certain repair processes that occur in the body mostly, or most effectively, during sleep. If you don't get enough sleep, those processes are going to be disturbed.

Moreover, not getting enough quality sleep regularly raises the risk of many diseases and disorders ranging from heart disease and stroke to obesity and dementia. People who work the night shift or irregular schedules may find getting quality sleep extra challenging. And life's stresses in general can disrupt our normal sleep routines. Fortunately, there are many things you can do to improve your sleep. Here's what you need to know.

There's no one-size-fits-all amount for sleep.

How much sleep you need changes with age. Experts recommend school-age children get at least nine hours a night and teens get between eight and 10. Most adults need at least seven hours or more of sleep each night.

It's a misconception that adults need less sleep as they get older. Older adults still need the same amount. But sleep quality can get worse as you age. Older adults are also more likely to take medications that interfere with sleep. On the flip side, more sleep isn't always better. For



Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

adults, if you're sleeping more than nine hours a night and you still don't feel refreshed, there may be some underlying medical issue.

Playing "catch up" is not a good strategy.

Researchers are finding that it's not ideal or effective to consistently play catch up with your sleep. If you have one bad night's sleep and take a nap, or sleep longer the next night, that can benefit you. But if you have a week's worth of getting too little sleep, the weekend isn't sufficient for you to catch up. It's not a healthy habit.

Seek help if you're having problems sleeping.

Some people have conditions that prevent them from getting enough quality sleep, no matter how hard they try. These problems are called sleep disorders. If you regularly have problems sleeping, talk with your health

care provider. They may have you keep a sleep diary to track your sleep for several weeks. They can also run tests, including sleep studies to identify sleep disorders. Treatments are available for many common sleep disorders. Cognitive behavioral therapy can help many people with insomnia get better sleep. Medications can also help some people.

GETTING BETTER SLEEP

Here are some quick tips to help you get some solid sleep:

- » Stick to a sleep schedule. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on the weekends.
- » Get some exercise every day.
- » Go outside. Try to get natural sunlight for at least 30 minutes every day.
- » Avoid nicotine and caffeine. Both are stimulants that keep you awake. Caffeine can take 6–8 hours to wear off completely.
- » Avoid alcohol and large meals before bedtime. Both can prevent deep, restorative sleep.
- » Limit electronics before bed. Try reading a book, listening to soothing music, or another relaxing activity instead.
- » Create a good sleeping environment. Keep the temperature cool if possible. Get rid of sound and light distractions.

See your health care provider if nothing you try helps.

