



Stay Healthy with Sleep

By Melissa Dallenbach RN

Getting enough sleep can be difficult and even more difficult during the busy holiday season. Enjoy the season, but remember sleep is important to staying healthy. Developing unhealthy sleep habits, can lead to habitual lack of sleep and the development of chronic disease.

Studies show, insufficient sleep is linked to increased risk for development of type 2 diabetes. It's been proven that sleep is important in improving blood sugar control in people who have diabetes type 2. Recent studies have linked a higher risk of developing high blood pressure, stroke, coronary artery disease and cardiac arrhythmias (irregular heartbeats); in people who do not get enough quality sleep.

Public health studies have also found links between people who habitually lack sleep and excess body weight. This is true for all age groups, especially for children. It is believed that insufficient sleep in children and adolescents can affect their brain development and the brain's ability to regulate appetite and metabolism.

The relationship between sleep and depression is complex. Sleep disturbance can be a symptom of depression and in recent studies once insomnia or other sleep issues were treated some people experienced a decrease in depressive symptoms.

Adults need 7-9 hours of sleep a night. With children it is dependent on age. School age children typically need 9-12 hours of sleep per day while teens need at least 8-10 hours. The younger the child the more hours of sleep they need.

Here are 12 simple tips to improve your sleep:

1. Avoid caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, 4 to 6 hours before bed.
2. Make bedroom a sleep-inducing environment. Quiet, dark, and cool can help promote sound sleep. White noise or ear plugs can help.

3. Establish a pre-sleep routine. Take a bath, read a book, practice meditation or relaxation exercises. Avoid screen time, and stimulating activities. If you tend to take your problems to bed, try writing them down-then put them aside.
4. Go to sleep when you're tired. If you are not asleep in 20 minutes get up, go to another room and repeat #3.
5. Don't be a nighttime clock-watcher. Turn you clock's face away from you.
6. Use light to your advantage. Let light in first thing in the morning, and get out of the office for an exercise, sun break during the day. If you have one, change the color of your night-light to red or orange—colors which tend to be sleep-inducing, avoid blue lights, like laptops, phones, TVs, which tend to wake you up.
7. Keep your internal clock set with a consistent sleep schedule. Going to sleep, and waking up at the same time every day, even on weekends, helps the body do this.
8. Avoid naps, if you are going to take a nap, do it early in day, and keep it short.
9. Lighten up evening meals. If you are hungry at bedtime, find a snack that won't disturb your sleep.
10. Drink majority of fluids for day, earlier in the day. Drink enough at bedtime that you won't wake up thirsty, but not so much that you need to get up to go to the bathroom.
11. Exercising helps sleep by expending energy, but finish exercising at least three hours before bed.
12. Follow through. Not every night will be perfect, but keeping a routine can help.

If you find you are still struggling, talk to your doctor, you may have a sleep disorder or issue that needs treatment.