

Getting enough sleep important

Though many are aware it's one of life's necessities, a good night's sleep is still widely considered a luxury. Despite the knowledge that a good night's sleep is beneficial in many ways, affecting not only mood but physical health as well, it's still quite possibly the one necessity of life that people routinely sacrifice.

Consider doing the same with other necessities, such as food and shelter, and the willingness of many people to forgo sufficient regular rest seems wholly irresponsible. Most people would not go a day or a week without eating, yet it's common to go a night or week or even longer without once getting a good night's rest.

That reality is potentially very harmful, as sleep can influence productivity, memory, mood, and alertness. To ensure you're getting sufficient and beneficial rest, consider the following tips.

- Keep a regular sleep schedule. Maintaining a regular bedtime and wakeup schedule helps alert the body to when it's time to go to sleep and wake up. While it's common to abandon such a routine on weekends, it's best to avoid

completely deviating from a weekly sleep schedule every Friday and Saturday night. For instance, those who routinely go to bed around 11 p.m. on weeknights should not be hitting the sack at sunrise each and every weekend. Keep as consistent a sleep schedule as possible, even on weekends.

- Sleep when it's dark outside. Nap aficionados will heap praise on the value of a daily midday nap. However, napping during the daytime could be the equivalent of stealing from Peter to pay Paul. While a daytime nap might be the rejuvenating boost you need in the middle of the day, it could very well be that you're tired during the day because you didn't sleep well overnight after taking a mid-afternoon nap.

- Make things as comfortable as possible. Some people need absolute silence when sleeping, while others need to listen to music. Each individual is different, but creating a serene and soothing sleep environment can help ensure a quality night's rest. If necessary, use earplugs to block out any external noises.

- Sleep on an adequate mattress. Sleeping

problems often result from older mattresses that have worn out their welcome. Look for one that provides both comfort and support. Couples should also be sure their mattress is big enough to comfortably fit two people.

- Keep eyes off the clock. It's probably a product of human nature, but many people, upon waking up in the middle of the night, quickly glance at the nearest clock. This should be avoided, as it often makes people start thinking about the sleep they're missing, indirectly making it more difficult to get back to sleep.

- Get your exercise. Exercise is beneficial in many ways, not the least of which is promoting a better night's sleep. However, exercise also gets many people amped up, so it's best to finish an exercise several hours before bedtime to allow your heart rate to return to normal and your mind to calm down.

- Stop eating and consuming caffeine several hours before bed. Eating shortly before bed can cause digestive problems, making it difficult to fall asleep or enjoy a good night's rest. It's also best to avoid caffeine and any other stimulants



in the hours leading up to bedtime.

- Make the bed simply a place to sleep. When you watch television from bed or work from bed, this can make it difficult to fall asleep in bed when it comes time to catch some Zzzzs. In general, it's best to reserve the bed solely for sleeping.



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