Sleep. Sweet, sweet sleep. High quality sleep is, without a doubt, one of the most powerful ways to create vibrant health and wellbeing in all areas of your life. It's one of the most impactful healing treatments available to us. And it's free! It is so important to our health that the Center for Disease Control considers insufficient sleep a public health concern.² And monitors it just like other major public health concerns such as cancer, heart attacks, and tuberculosis.

We know we need it, but many of us still struggle to get those 8 or so precious hours between the sheets each night. Estimates from the National Sleep Foundation’s Poll³ and National Health Interview Survey⁴ suggest that at
least 1 in 3 Americans is not getting enough quality sleep. That’s an enormous impact on our collective wellbeing and productivity!

The Value Of Good Sleep

“Far too many people accept sleep deprivation and sleepiness as a way of life. They see treatment of sleep illness as optional. In reality, countless studies have connected sleep illness with severe health consequences.” – Safwan Badr, MD, chief of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine Division at Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit.

Studies indicate that getting 7-9 hours of high quality sleep is associated with overall lower risk of dementia, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, stroke, kidney disease, high blood pressure, and cancer. It’s associated with healthy weight, less obesity, a stronger immune system, and decreased chronic and acute pain. It’s also associated with improved mood, increased emotional wellbeing, lower perceived stress levels, higher satisfaction with our sex lives, better focus and attention, improved learning and memory, enhanced creativity, faster reaction times, and higher productivity. And the list goes on and on.5

Now, that’s some powerful medicine!

How Much Do We Really Need?

Some people argue they can function just fine with less than optimal sleep. But the research leaves little to be debated about the effects of insufficient sleep on our functioning. “After several nights of losing sleep—even a loss of just 1–2 hours per night—your ability to function suffers as if you haven’t slept at all for a day or two,” according to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. So missing even an hour of needed sleep a night can have a huge impact on your health, especially over time.5

You’ll see varying numbers on the ideal amount of sleep, but most experts agree 7-9 hours a night is a good range for a healthy adult. The National Sleep Foundation has a great chart that identifies the rule-of-thumb sleep recommendations for different age groups. Check it out here.

That said these are only guidelines. And it’s important to do some investigation and listening to figure out your own unique needs.

8 Tips For Amazing Sleep

Here’s a few simple tips to help you get those precious and powerful hours of Zzz’s each night:

1. Assess Your Own Individual Needs & Habits

- Do some investigation to figure out how many hours you require to feel good. Are you productive, healthy and happy on seven hours? Or does it take nine hours of quality ZZZs to get you into high gear?
- Are you having any difficulties sleeping? Do you depend on caffeine to get you through the day? Do you feel sleepy when driving?
- Notice your mood, energy and health after a poor night’s sleep versus a good one. How often you are actually getting a good nights rest?

2. Make it a priority

- The National Sleep Foundation suggests we schedule sleep like any other daily activity—put it on our “to-do list” and cross it off every night. Avoid making it the thing you do only after everything else is done. Instead stop doing other things so you get the sleep you need.
3. Stick to a sleep schedule, even on weekends

- This allows your body to settle into a steady circadian rhythm, which is crucial for the healthy functioning of many of your body's systems, but especially your hormones.

4. Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual

- Take a warm bath, read a mellow book, do some mindful breathing, write down your gratitude for the day, meditate, stretch quietly, or have a cup of herbal tea (make sure it's caffeine free!).

5. Exercise Daily

- It may seem counterintuitive, but you need good energy balance to get good sleep. So 30 minutes of daily exercise can make a huge difference in the quality of your sleep. But do avoid exercising in the 3 hours before bed, as this can stimulate us and make falling asleep more difficult.

6. Evaluate & adjust your sleep conditions for uninterrupted rest

- Ensure an ideal temperature—not too hot, not too cold.
- Make your bedroom as sound-free as possible. You can also try a white noise machine to drown out any remaining noises if needed.
- Make sure your room is plenty dark during the hours you sleep.
- Modify your bed to make it as comfortable as possible. Find a comfortable mattress and pillows.

7. Beware of hidden sleep stealers

- Major culprits are alcohol, caffeine, and sugar.

8. Avoid stimulating activities for 2 hours before bed

- Turn off electronics (TV, computer, phone, tablets, video games)
- Avoid anxiety-provoking conversations or arguments
- Avoid paying bills or checking your finances

(Tips adapted from the National Sleep Foundation®)

WHEN TO GET MORE SUPPORT:

If you or a family member are experiencing any of the following symptoms you should consult your medical provider:

- Sleepiness during the day or when you expect to be awake and alert
- Snoring
- Leg cramps or tingling
- Gasping or difficulty breathing during sleep
- Prolonged insomnia
- Or another symptom that is preventing you from sleeping well

Sweet Dreams!

With Love,
Amber
References:


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