

Good Sleep is Vital to Good Health

You may not realize the extent to which getting a good night's sleep can keep you healthy. Getting adequate rest is vital to your physical health, your mood, and your overall well-being. Studies have repeatedly shown how much of a negative impact a lack of sleep can have on your daily functioning. Sleep-deprived people perform poorly in almost all areas.

While we sleep, our bodies secrete hormones that positively affect our mood, energy, memory, and concentration. So it's important to get an adequate amount of sleep. While eight hours of sleep is a good goal, the amount of sleep needed varies by individual. Some people do well with only seven hours of sleep, while others need nine or more.

When you're getting enough good sleep at night, you can:

- **Have less stress.** Without enough rest, the body functions on high alert. Increased blood pressure and the production of stress hormones can make it harder to fall asleep and recharge the next night. Getting better rest will help you deal with the day's stressors more effectively.
- **Be more alert and active during the day.** With enough rest, you'll have higher levels of energy and mental acuity for performing complex physical and mental tasks.
- **Avoid depression.** Getting enough sleep helps regulate levels of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that affects our mood. Having low levels of serotonin can lead to depression, anxiety and other behavioral health disorders.
- **Better control your weight.** Lack of sleep adversely affects levels of hormones that regulate our appetite. This can contribute to being overweight or obese.
- **Have a healthier heart.** Blood pressure and cholesterol levels are higher when you're sleep-deprived, and these are risk factors for heart disease and stroke.
- **Repair and restore your body.** When we sleep, cells produce protein which is used to help repair cells damaged by stress, fatigue and muscle strain.
- **Have better memory function.** Deep sleep helps us "consolidate" memories, making connections between events, feelings and experiences. This helps us retrieve our memories in the future.

If lack of sleep is regularly impacting your daily life, consult with your family doctor or a sleep disorders specialist. Ask to be evaluated for sleep problems. There are also a number of simple techniques you can try at home that can help you get a better night's sleep. (See the list of tips below.)

The Need for Better Sleep

Only forty-four percent of people in the U.S. say they get a good night's sleep every night or almost every night on work nights or week nights.

Twenty-five percent of people say they never get a good night's sleep on work nights.

– National Sleep Foundation, International Bedroom Poll

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Lack of Sleep Impacts Your Work

The pace of today's workplace demands that we work smarter, faster and more efficiently than ever before. But if you're deprived of sleep, it can be very difficult to keep up.

Being deprived of sleep can make you more prone to having accidents, injuries and sick days. Testing has shown that with a driving simulator or a hand-eye coordination task, sleep-deprived people perform just as badly as intoxicated people. Studies have also shown that sleep loss and poor-quality sleep result in accidents and injuries on the job.

A lack of sleep can adversely impact a number of key areas of functioning that you need at work:

Memory—Without the memory consolidation effects of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, you're much more likely to be forgetful on the job.

Concentration, alertness and attention—Sleep-deprived people have more trouble focusing on complex tasks and performing them efficiently. They are not as adept at learning or problem solving.

Reaction time—With a lack of rest, you're not as physically responsive, which can result in work accidents and injuries, in addition to fatigue-related accidents during the workday commute.

Decision making—A lack of focus can cause confusion, which makes it more difficult to assess challenging situations and respond appropriately.

Tips for Getting Better Sleep

If you're having trouble with sleep, try these techniques.

- ❑ Strive to block out seven to nine hours per night of uninterrupted sleep.
- ❑ Keep a regular sleep-wake cycle. Try to wake and rise close to the same time every day, including weekends.
- ❑ Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine in the four to six hours before bedtime.
- ❑ Don't eat large meals within two hours of bedtime.
- ❑ Don't exercise within two hours of bedtime; exercising earlier can help you sleep more soundly.
- ❑ Do not use your bedroom for anything other than sleep. Don't problem-solve, watch TV, pay bills, check social media or text.
- ❑ Avoid napping during the day.
- ❑ Do the same things each night to tell your body that it's time to wind down. Try a pre-sleep ritual such as a warm bath, soft music, or reading.
- ❑ Avoid looking at the clock.
- ❑ If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, do a quiet activity somewhere else and return to bed when you're sleepy.
- ❑ If necessary, talk to your doctor.

Your ParTNers EAP offers information and resources that can help with sleep issues. Call toll-free **1.855.Here4TN** (1.855.437.3486) 24 hours a day, seven days a week for no-cost, confidential help from a counseling professional. You can also find extensive information on the **www.HERE4TN.com** website.