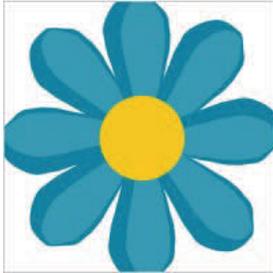




Share the Wellness Tip

April 19, 2013



The Key to Catching Some ZZZs

Sleep is as important to your health as water and food. Most adults need seven to eight hours of quality sleep a night. But more than one-quarter of the U.S. population reports occasionally not getting enough sleep, while nearly 10 percent experience chronic insomnia. When you can't get a decent night's rest, the problem may be bad sleep habits. Here's how to repair your routine:

- Hit the sack and get up around the same time every day.
- Exercise for at least 30 minutes each day. But schedule workouts, especially vigorous ones, at least two to three hours before bedtime. Exercise can temporarily boost alertness.
- Avoid caffeine after lunch. A potent stimulant, caffeine can keep some people awake for hours.
- Build a before-bedtime ritual. Take a warm bath, read or put on snuggly PJs.
- Spend some time "winding down" and allow your body and brain to adapt to a decrease in activity. Try to begin winding down two hours before bedtime. Stop all work, texts and calls. Reading or listening to music for an hour before you go to bed can also help you wind down.
- Night cap? No thanks. Alcohol may help you slip into a light sleep, but it won't let you get the deep sleep you need to feel refreshed.
- Tune out the distractions. For instance, if noises bother you, earplugs or the whir of a fan may help.
- Jot down some quick notes about your worries before bedtime. Promise to focus on the problems tomorrow when you have time.

And remember, sufficient sleep is not a luxury—it is a necessity. Lack of sleep can affect your immune system and can also affect how fast you recover if you do get sick. Long-term lack of sleep also increases your risk of obesity, diabetes, and heart and blood vessel (cardiovascular) disease.

Sources: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#); [National Sleep Foundation](#); [Mayo Clinic](#)

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