

Better Sleep for Better Health



Sleep - it's something we spend about a third of our lives doing and yet, the importance of powering down and allowing our bodies the adequate time to recharge often goes unrecognised. In fact, if you're not getting suitable shut-eye time you could be putting yourself at risk of heart disease, obesity, poor immune health, depression, dementia and more. Catching those Zzzs could be the key to unlocking a healthier you!

Sleep Deprivation Dangers



Drowsy Driving

It's been estimated that 20-30% of all fatal crashes on Australian roads are due to fatigue.¹ When you're tired and you lack sleep, you have poor memory, increased impulsiveness, and an overall poor judgment.

Mental Health

A good night's sleep helps foster both mental and emotional resilience, while chronic sleep deprivation sets the stage for negative thinking and emotional vulnerability. Altered sleep patterns are a hallmark of many mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and stress. Research has also shown that sleep helps clear away the proteins that are strongly linked to Alzheimer's disease, called amyloid and tau. Interrupting sleep may allow too much of them to build up.² If you find yourself sleeping too little or too much on a regular basis, it's important to bring this up with your nurse or doctor.

Weight Gain

If you sleep around about five hours or less every night, there is a 50 percent likelihood of being obese.³ Sleep loss gives rise to the release of the hormone ghrelin, the 'hunger' hormone. When ghrelin is released it triggers us to seek out carbohydrates, particularly sugars. It also decreases the release of leptin - a hormone that is responsible for letting us know when we're full and satisfied. This can result in a constant feeling of hunger and a general slow-down of your metabolism.

Diabetes

Sleep deprivation is an often overlooked but significant risk factor for type 2 diabetes, a disease that involves too much glucose (or sugar) in the blood. Ongoing sleep loss causes less insulin - a hormone that regulates blood sugar - to be released after you eat and more stress hormones such as cortisol, which makes it harder for insulin to do its job effectively. The net effect results in too much glucose in the bloodstream which can damage the vessels that carry oxygen-rich blood to your organs.

Heart Disease

Chronic sleep disruption not only raises blood pressure but activates a molecule that triggers inflammation and leads to fatty build-up in the arteries. In a recent Journal of the American College of Cardiology paper, researchers describe how they analyzed sleep habits and medical records of 461,347 people aged 40–69 years living in the U.K. The analysis

revealed that those who slept less than 6 hours per night had a 20% higher risk of a first heart attack in comparison to those who slept 6-9 hours. Those who slept more than 9 hours had a 34% higher risk.⁴

Good News...



Fortunately, if sleep deprivation lasts only a few days, these effects can be reversed. In the long run, it's best to try to get 7-9 hours of uninterrupted sleep on a nightly basis so you can reap a multitude of life-changing benefits from enhanced creativity and productivity to prolonging your life.

BENEFITS OF OPTIMAL SLEEP

- Increases athletic performance
- increases muscle recovery
- Increases testosterone levels
- Controls optimal insulin secretion
- Encourages healthy cell division (helps prevent cancer)
- Promotes skin health and a youthful appearance
- Increases ability to gain new insight into complex problems by 50%
- Reduces mental distress
- Boosts attention and working memory

Sleep your way to Better Health



Top 10 Tips⁵

Tip 1. Dim the Lights Early: Reduce the amount of light exposure at least half an hour before you go to bed. Brightness stops the production of melatonin, the ‘tired’ hormone, suppressing your sleep signal. Think about blackout blinds, thick curtains and eye masks especially if you work night shifts and need to sleep during the day.



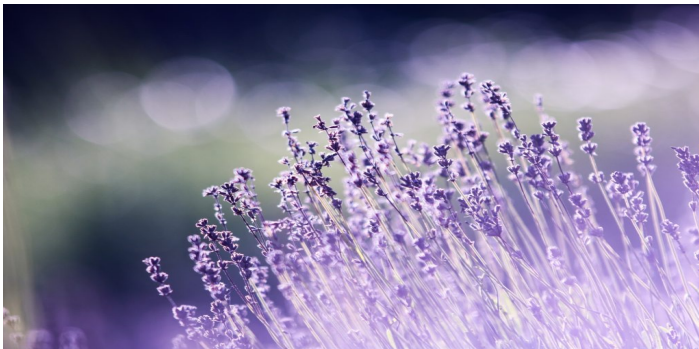
Tip 2. Keep Cool: As night-time approaches, our body temperature naturally drops, signalling that it’s time to slow down and get some rest. By keeping your bedroom cooler, you’re reinforcing your body’s natural instinct to sleep. If your room is too hot, your body will work all night to cool down. A bedroom temperature of around 18 degrees Celsius is ideal as it stimulates the production of melatonin which encourages sleep. Keeping the window slightly open or a quiet fan can help regulate the temperature of your bedroom while also circulating air.



Tip 3. Stick to a Sleep Schedule: Try to go to bed and get up at the same time, even on the weekends to help regulate your body's clock. Setting a bedtime alarm can serve as a great reminder to turn off the TV, log off social media and relax before bed. Without it, it's easy to slip into a Netflix binge or an impending work deadline right from the comforts of your covers. Aim for at least an hour before bed and make sure the alarm repeats every day.



Tip 4. Wind Down: Ideally at least an hour before bed, turn off the TV or computer and maybe take a bath, listen to relaxing music, read a book or practice meditation before bed to relax the brain and fall asleep. Journaling is another simple way to quiet your mind by getting your thoughts and feelings down on paper. Soothing teas such as chamomile and the scent of lavender can also promote a restful sleep and help reduce stress.



Tip 5. Avoid 'Sleep Sabotage' Food and Drink: Stimulants such as coffee, sugary drinks and chocolate contain caffeine which inhibit chemicals in the brain that promote sleep and should be avoided at least 6 hours before bedtime. While alcohol is linked to increasing certain sleepy feelings, it also causes you to wake up repeatedly, interfering with restorative sleep. Eating big or spicy meals can also cause discomfort from indigestion that can make it hard to sleep. If you can, avoid large meals for 2-3 hours before bed.



Tip 6. Comfortable Bedroom Environment: Make sure your mattress is supportive and that it has not exceeded its life expectancy - about 9 or 10 years for most good quality mattresses. Have comfortable pillows and make the room attractive and inviting for sleep but also free of allergens that might affect you and objects that might cause you to slip or fall if you have to get up during the night. Don't use your bedroom for activities that are not conducive to sleep such as work, watching TV or eating.



Tip 7. Daily Exercise: Regular exercise during daylight hours is one of the best ways to ensure a good night's sleep. Moderate aerobic exercise helps stabilise your mood and decompress the mind, a cognitive process that is important for naturally transitioning to sleep.



Tip 8. Wake Up Ready to Go: To get those extra Zzz's in the morning, knock out a few chores the night before like: set out your clothes, prepare next day's lunch or pack your gym bag. If there are tasks you need to complete, and you're afraid you'll forget about them by morning, try jotting them down on a to-do list.



Tip 9. Tech Tweaks: Leave the electronics and social media behind. The bright light of a TV, computer or smartphone can affect your sleep patterns and keep you alert. A red filter app may help reduce your exposure and use the “do not disturb” function to block all notifications during sleep hours. If needed, charge your device overnight somewhere other than next to your bed, like in another room - the farther away the better.



Tip 10. Don't lie in Bed Tossing and Turning if Restless: If you still can't sleep, it's better to get up and reset. Try some of the relaxation activities mentioned above for a short time before getting back to bed. Ten minutes of reading might save you hours of staring at the ceiling.



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