

healthy LIVING

NEW IMAGE



SLEEP YOUR WAY TO HEALTH ...

Sleep plays a vital role in good health and well-being throughout your life. Getting enough quality sleep at the right times can help protect your mental health, physical health, quality of life, as well as your safety and the safety of those around you. Like good diet and exercise, sleep is a critical component to overall health.

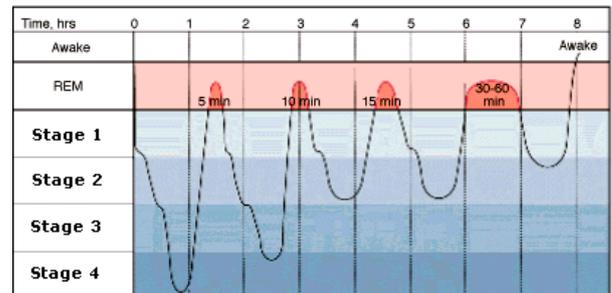
Sleep deprivation is linked to an increased risk of high blood pressure, stroke heart disease, CVD, diabetes and kidney disease. Being deficient in sleep is also linked with an increased risk of obesity; in fact some studies have shown that for each hour of sleep lost your risk of obesity increases.

What happens when we sleep?

Each night when we drop off to sleep and our conscious mind switches off, our brain and body start to work on all the functions we take for granted. A lot of these neural and cognitive functions cannot be provided by wakefulness and hence the need for us to sleep. Some of these functions include our brain coding newly acquired information, leading to better memory during wakefulness. The brain processes, sorts, consolidates and commits to memory the days events.

Stages of the sleep cycle

There are a number of stages that must occur and repeat in sequence to provide a quality sleep experience. During an average 8 hour nightly sleep, you will go through approximately 5 sleep cycles. The chart below shows the duration of sleep and cycle stages across an average night sleep.



There are two types of sleep during the sleep cycle. **NREM** - Non Rapid Eye Movement (stages 1-4) and **REM** sleep.

STAGE 1 - Drowsiness/light sleep and our initial entry into sleep; it usually last from 1-7 minutes.

STAGE 2 - Sleep onset and preparation for deep sleep. Breathing and heart rate slow slightly and body temperature decreases. The initial cycle time lasts 10-25mins and increases with each cycle.

STAGES 3 & 4 - These are the deepest and most restorative sleep stages commonly called deep sleep. Deep sleep is technically called slow wave sleep (SWS) and typically last approx 20-40 minutes.

During the stages of NREM sleep, muscles are completely relaxed, blood pressure drops and breathing slows. Blood supply to the muscles is increased, energy is restored, tissue is repaired and growth hormone production takes place.

At the end of deep sleep you enter into REM sleep. During REM sleep, your eyes move quickly in different directions. That doesn't happen during non-REM sleep. (Check out your pets sleeping; you will easily see when they enter into a REM sleep stage).

Usually, REM sleep happens 90 minutes after falling asleep & lasts around 5 minutes in length. Each REM cycle occurs every 70-120 minutes and its duration progressively lengthens from the initial 5 minutes upwards to an hour in length. Your heart rate and breathing quickens. REM sleep is where the brain is most active and dreaming takes place. Just as deep sleep renews the body and tissues, REM sleep renews the mind by playing a key role in learning and memory. REM sleep consolidates and processes the days events and information. It is important in strengthening memory and replenishing the feel good neurotransmitters, like serotonin and dopamine.

What happens when we are sleep deprived?

If you aren't getting enough deep sleep, your body will try to make that up first, at the expense of REM sleep.

If you miss out on REM sleep you may notice:

- Lack of motivation
- Cravings for high energy sweet & carbohydrate rich foods
- Moodiness or irritability
- Difficulty managing weight
- Inability to cope with stress (low threshold)

How much is enough?

The amount of sleep the body requires for full restoration and function, changes over the lifecycle (see graphic). A newborn will require on average 15 hours of sleep each day, where as a senior 65+ will require an average of around 7.5 hours a day.



How to improve your quality of sleep.

During the day get some exercise and be mindful of caffeine and alcohol, they can negatively affect sleep quality and shorten sleep cycles.

To pave the way for better sleep, follow these simple yet effective healthy sleep tips.

1. Go to bed around the same time each night - ideally by 10pm. Stick to a sleep schedule even on the weekends.

2. Aim for 7.5 - 9 hours of sleep each night.
3. Start to unwind at least 30 minutes before bed by switching off electronics before bed, including the Wi-Fi. Get into the practice of a relaxing ritual each evening before bed.
4. Make sure your bedroom is a comfortable temperature and your mattress and pillow are comfortable and supportive.
5. Remove all distracting light and noise e.g. loud ticking or brightly lit clocks. Keep lighting low and warm, e.g. avoid harsh fluorescent lighting shortly before bed.

To get more mind and mood-boosting REM sleep, try sleeping an extra 30 minutes to an hour in the morning, when REM sleep stages are longer. Improving your overall sleep will also increase your REM sleep.

With our busy lifestyles people don't consider sleep as a priority. However, if you wish to live a longer, happier, healthier life, then getting your 'nightly 8 hours' is most beneficial. Ensure sleep is scheduled into your daily routine, just like, gym, work, and walking the dog etc, that way sleep is made a priority.

Bonus quick quiz -Test your Sleep IQ

The following ten true/false questions (courtesy of www.sleepfoundation.org) test your sleep IQ. How much do you know really know about sleep? Perhaps you'll be surprised.

1. During sleep your brain rests T/F
2. Sleeping just one hour less a night can prevent you from learning or functioning normally. T/F
3. Resting in bed with your eyes closed cannot satisfy your body's need for sleep. T/F
4. Snoring is not harmful as long as it doesn't disturb others. T/F
5. If you're sleepy, raising the volume of your radio is a great way to stay awake while driving. T/F
6. No matter how sleepy you are, you can force yourself to stay awake. T/F
7. Everyone dreams every night. T/F
8. Sleep disorders are mainly due to worry or psychological problems. T/F
9. The human body never adjusts to night shift work. T/F
10. Most sleep disorders go away even without treatment. T/F

The answers are at the bottom of the page.

1.F, 2.T, 3.T, 4.F, 5.F, 6.F, 7.T, 8.F, 9.T, 10.F.