The Importance of Sleep

Getting the right amount of sleep will help you live a healthy lifestyle. Your body needs a good sleep-wake balance to function well. When you sleep well your mind and body renews itself to take on another day.

Why is sleep so good for my health?

Getting enough sleep has many benefits to keep you healthy. Here are a few examples of how sleep improves your health and well-being:

- **Physical**
  - Helps to control your appetite and improve your metabolism
  - Helps your body fight illness
  - Repairs and nourishes muscles
  - Regulates heart rate, breathing and blood pressure

- **Emotional**
  - Improves well-being as you tend to feel happier and more optimistic
  - Reduces feelings of anxiety, frustration and depression

- **Mental**
  - Improves focus and clearer thinking to make better decisions
  - Helps problem solving and ability to remember things

How much sleep do I need to stay healthy?

Sleep needs change as we age. Newborns need more sleep than children. Children need more sleep than adults. An average adult needs 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night.

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What can I do to make sure I sleep well?

Follow these steps to make sure you are getting the valuable sleep you need to stay healthy:

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on the weekends.
- Do something relaxing every night before you go to bed, such as reading, taking a hot bath, etc.
- Make sure your bedroom is dark, quiet and at the right temperature for you.
- Use your bed only for sleeping and sex. Do not read or watch TV in your bedroom.
- Stop eating at least 2 to 3 hours before bedtime.
- Exercise regularly, but do not finish within a few hours before bedtime.
- Avoid the use of caffeine before bedtime. This includes coffee, chocolate, tea, etc.
- Avoid nicotine and alcohol before bedtime.

Could I have a sleep disorder?

Sleep disorders affect the ability to get a good night's sleep and can leave you feeling tired during the day. Common sleep disorders include sleep apnea and insomnia:

- **Sleep apnea** is a condition when breathing stops and starts during sleep. Feeling tired after a full night's sleep or loud snoring can be signs of sleep apnea.
- **Insomnia** is the inability to fall asleep or stay asleep.

Treatments are available for sleep disorders. Talk to your physician or a sleep specialist if you think you have a sleep disorder.

Can poor sleep or sleep disorders cause health problems?

We are learning more about how poor sleep and sleep disorders aff ect the development of long-lasting health problems. Lack of sleep interferes with the body's ability to prevent the following illnesses:

- Diabetes
- Heart Disease
- Obesity
- Depression

Where can I find more information?

If you are having problems sleeping, talk to your health care provider. He or she can help you identify what may be causing the problem.

You can also find information on the internet. Here are two websites that you may be interested in:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  cdc.gov/sleep
- National Sleep Foundation
  sleepfoundation.org

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