Sleep: Essential for a Healthy Life

Not getting the recommended 7-9 hours of sleep per night can have adverse health effects. Lack of sleep is linked with a number of diseases such as diabetes, depression and obesity. Not sleeping enough is also a major cause of motor vehicle, and machinery related accidents. More than one third of adults report to sleeping less than 7 hours; below are some tips on how to get the sleep you need.

Establish a nightly routine

- Try reading instead of being on the computer or watching TV, the bright lights can stimulate you and cause you to stay up late.
- Following the same procedure every night will establish balance and wind you down; drink chamomile tea, take a bath, etc.

Make the bedroom a sanctuary

- Have wall colors in cool colors such as blue, purple or gray to invoke relaxation.
- No TV in the bedroom, this will keep you wound up, when relaxation should be the focus.
- Keep it clean and orderly, clutter will act as a stressor.
- Invest in a nice mattress, sheets, blankets, pillows, etc. You should be getting at least 2,555 hours of sleep a year; make your bed something you look forward to relaxing in.
- Keep the temperature reasonable. If the bedroom is too warm or cold, you will wake up frequently to get comfortable.

**Natural remedies**

- Experiment with scents that are known to be relaxing, try mixing essential oils, or look for air fresheners such as plug-ins that can fill the room with soothing smells.
- Lavender is the most often used scent to produce relaxation, other scents such as chamomile, jasmine, rose, and sandalwood.
- Avoid scents that are stimulating such as peppermint, rosemary, lemon or pine. These may keep you awake longer.

**Exercise**

- Exercising during the day can help ensure that you are tired before you go to sleep. Just don’t work out 3 hours prior to bed or you may be too energized to snooze.
- Look up various stretches to do before bed. Trying yoga or stretching before you go to sleep will help relax the body and get you a better quality of sleep.

**Foods to Avoid Before Bed**

Many foods and beverages contain caffeine that can keep you up much later than intended, other things can irritate the stomach, and cause you to wake up multiple times at night:

- Coffee and Sodas
- Spicy Foods
- Chocolate
- Alcohol
- Too Many Liquids

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**Exercise Your Heart**

![Image of people exercising](image)

*Research has shown that being physically active is crucial to not only improving cardiovascular health but also the prevention of stroke and heart disease. The American Heart Association, American College of Sports Medicine and The American College of Lifestyle Medicine all recommend 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week. This can be divided into*
smaller segments of 10-15 minutes. The CDC recommends the “talk test” to rate intensity. During moderate exercise, you can talk, but not sing; during vigorous exercise, talking is difficult.

**Remember** that physical activity can be *anything* that gets your body up and moving; gardening, housework, dancing etc. You can easily integrate small changes into your daily routine to increase activity. Just say no to the elevator, take the stairs instead. Don’t waste your time looking for the perfect parking spot, instead, go straight to the back of the lot.

**The American Heart Association** understands the importance of daily activity. They recognize that walking is an activity that most people will sustain and not “dropout”. Their annual event, The Heart Walk, is a way to encourage people to get moving while raising awareness of heart related illnesses. The Heart Walk is also an excellent way to raise funds to help save lives from possibly preventable diseases. There are 305 Heart Walks nationwide and we are fortunate to have one in Downtown Toledo on May 30th! This event is great for the whole family to enjoy.

**Don’t want to walk alone?** Encourage your friends, family, and colleagues to join you! In a January 2015 article published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, researchers found that walking groups had significant decreases in blood pressure, resting heart rate, BMI, total cholesterol, and body fat. In addition to significant increases to VO2 Max, physical functioning, and 6 minute walk test. There was also a significant decrease in depression scores. They found no adverse side-effects, so grab a friend, get up, start! walking, enjoy the positive benefits and support a great cause!

![Reasons to Drink Water](image)

1. Help control calories: many times people overeat, when in fact they are thirsty.
2. Can energize muscles: when muscle cells do not have enough fluids, they don’t work as well and performance can suffer.
3. Helps skin looking beautiful: skin contains plenty of water; dehydration can make the skin look more dry and wrinkled.
4. Water helps eliminate wastes and toxins from your body through the lymphatic system, kidneys and intestines.
5. Your blood is over 80% and your bones are over 50% water. Water is needed to make healthy new cells.
6. Being dehydrated can lower your energy and make you feel tired and may even cause headaches.

**How to drink more Water**

The suggested amount of water a person varies. If you exercise, more water is necessary to ensure you do not get dehydrated. For most people 8 glasses or 64 ounces are recommended. Come up with fun
ideas to drink more water, or use some of the below tips:

- Drink carbonated water if you are used to soda.
- Add cucumber slices or lemons for a natural enhancer.
- Drink through a straw, this increases the volume of liquid you consume.
- Set timers on your every couple of hours or try the smart phone app “Water Your Body”
- Start and end your day with a glass of water.
- Keep a bottle at your desk, in your car, by your bed, etc. so you can refill and drink anytime.
- Substitute water for milk in protein shakes.
- Try a flavored water enhancer such as Mio; there are a lot of different flavors to prevent you from getting bored.
- Fill a large cup with ice and snack on it throughout the day.

Sources Used:
Sleep: National Sleep Foundation
http://www.sleepfoundation.org/
Water:
http://www.webmd.com/diet/features/6-reasons-to-drink-water

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