

The Importance of a Good Night's Sleep

Sleep is very important to a healthy lifestyle and wellness

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Are you getting a good night's sleep? Sleep is very important to a healthy lifestyle and wellness. Difficulty sleeping can occur at any age, but usually occurs more frequently in older persons.

Sleeping problems can take several forms including trouble falling asleep, sleeping too soundly or sleeping too much. Some may not be able to fall asleep at all during the night, while others may be able to go to sleep but then awake in the early morning and not be able to fall back to sleep.

Sometimes a person may be restless despite sleeping during the night and will awake tired.

Sleep patterns do change with age. Usually, older persons may require less sleep. That said, most persons should be getting at least eight hours of uninterrupted sleep each night.

There are many causes of sleep problems which may include certain health conditions that cause pain or shortness of breath with lying face upward, or the use of some medications, caffeine or alcohol.

Depression and stress also are common causes of sleeping problems. Napping too much in the daytime is yet another possible cause. Persons who may work an evening shift frequently suffer with sleeping difficulties, as well.

Here are some helpful tips for improving your sleep:

- Go to bed at the same time each night and awake the same time each morning. This is a good habit to develop even on the days you are off or on vacation.
- Avoid taking naps. If you need to nap, it should only be for about 20 minutes.
- Avoid excessive use of alcohol, caffeine, cigarette smoking and other stimulants such as over-the-counter decongestants.
- Avoid going to bed just after eating or when hungry.

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Get regular physical activity in the daytime. Avoid exercising just before bedtime.

- Make sure the level of light and temperature in the bedroom are good for sleeping. Avoid too much light and either too cold or too warm conditions. Make sure to have an adequate amount of covers on your bed to help the temperature remain comfortable.
- Use your bed for sleep and not for watching television or reading.
- Avoid drinking liquids before bedtime. This will usually make you have to break your sleep cycle to go to the bathroom.

If you have trouble sleeping, get out of bed instead of just lying there. Do something else until you feel sleepy.

You should consider your doctor if any of the following occurs:

- Continue for more than a week.
- Are affecting your ability to function.
- Occur with heavy or loud snoring.
- May be related to medication you are taking.
- Occur with other symptoms of pain, shortness of breath, leg cramps, or frequent urination.

Be diligent with your sleep habits, and you should notice an overall change in wellness.