



WELLNESS

Sleep: More Important Than You Think!

Everyone knows the difficulty of dragging through a day after getting too few hours of sleep the night before. But do you know why 7 to 8 hours of sleep per night is the recommended amount for most adults?

Recent advancements in medical science have given us the ability to learn more about sleep (and sleep deprivation) and its relationship to our physical, mental and emotional health. Here's what the most-recent research is reporting:



Weight Gain and Obesity

A study from the University of Chicago found that lack of sleep makes you want to eat more. The reason? Sleep loss appears to trigger changes in hormones that regulate appetite and stimulate hunger for high-calorie foods like cookies and chips. Researchers believe that we crave high-calorie foods when we're tired because they offer up instant energy. According to a Columbia University study, people who get less than the recommended seven to eight hours of sleep a night are up to 73% more likely to be obese.

Cardiovascular Health, Cancer and Diabetes

According to the Harvard-run Nurses' Health Study, failing to get enough sleep or sleeping at odd hours heightens the risk for a variety of major illnesses, including heart disease, cancer and diabetes. A report from the study summarizes that a sleep deficit may put the body into a state of high alert, increasing the production of stress hormones and driving up blood pressure, a major risk factor for heart attacks and strokes. Additionally, people who are sleep-deprived have elevated levels of substances in the blood that indicate a heightened state of inflammation in the body, which is now also recognized as a major risk factor for heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes.

A Yale University study found that when people slept less than six hours a night on average, their risk of adult-onset diabetes doubled. Researchers suspect that in an effort to give you more energy when you're tired, your body may raise your blood glucose levels – a condition that, if it persists, is a major risk factor for diabetes. Only after several nights of adequate sleep did the blood glucose levels of the study participants return to normal.

Depression and Mood Disorders

It is well-known that sleep problems can be a key sign of depression. At least 80% of depressed people experience insomnia – difficulty falling asleep or, most often, staying asleep. However, the latest medical research now reports that the reverse is also true – sleep disorders can actually trigger depression or other mood disorders. The explanation? Sleep, mood and mental/emotional behaviors all share a complex mix of chemistry in the brain. Disordered sleep appears to set off an array of forces in the brain and nervous system that can result in a depressed mood, major depressive episode or other mood disorder.

Memory, Learning and Job Performance

In a recent study, adults who were allowed just five hours of sleep a night for a week continuously scored poorly on tests. Only after they slept eight hours for two nights in a row did their scores improve. Researchers say by cutting your sleep short, you miss out on REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, which helps consolidate information and enhance memory.

According to a Better Sleep Council survey, sleep-deprived workers reported the following as work-related consequences from lack of sleep:

- 31 percent reported a decline in quality of work
- 31 percent reported impaired thinking or judgment at work
- 30 percent reported trouble retaining information



The survey summarized that “sleep deprivation impacts your alertness, your productivity and your ability to socially interact with co-workers.”

Safety at Work or While Driving

Researchers say that excessive sleepiness contributes to a greater than twofold-higher risk of sustaining a workplace injury. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports you're three times more likely to be in a car accident caused by poor sleep than by drunk driving. The NHTSA conservatively estimates that there are 100,000 car accidents each year caused by drowsiness, and these crashes result in 71,000 injuries and 1,500 deaths.

How Much Sleep Should You Get?

Despite the growing scientific evidence that suggests that too little sleep or erratic sleep may harm your health, many people remain indifferent to the importance of sleep. Forty-one percent of women in a nationwide poll conducted by the Better Sleep Council didn't think cutting back on their sleep would harm their health. These women reported getting six hours of sleep or less each night, which is an insufficient amount of sleep for most adults. According to the latest research, the human body still needs 7-8 hours per night (the recommended average for adults).

What Causes Sleep Deprivation?

The National Institutes of Health reports that approximately 70 million people in the United States are affected by a sleep problem. What are the causes of sleep loss?

- Not allowing enough time for sleep
- Anything that causes insomnia or poor quality sleep
- Excessive worry, depression
- Sleep disorders
- Repeated awakenings from noise
- Working at night, shift work
- Medical illness causing pain, difficulty breathing, etc.



What To Do

If you have difficulty with your sleep for any reason, take action. Most sleep difficulties are either caused or reinforced by lifestyle habits or behaviors that are antagonistic toward good, restful sleep. Start by learning more about sleep and good sleep habits. There are many resources at your local book store, library or online (National Sleep Foundation website: www.sleepfoundation.org) that are filled with information and tips about how to get a better night's sleep.

If you make changes, have done all you can, and still are not getting good, quality sleep, talk to your doctor. You may have a sleep disorder that is resulting from a physical problem such as diabetes, Sleep Apnea or Restless Legs Syndrome. Or an emotional problem like anxiety or depression may be disrupting your sleep. Your doctor can recommend appropriate treatment.

Your EAP is Here to Help

Quality sleep is vital to your health, happiness and productivity. If sleep is a problem for you or one of your dependents, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals or information. We're here to help you.

MENTAL HEALTH

Tips on Managing Job Stress

According to the American Institute of Stress, job stress is the single greatest health problem for working adults. When the effects of stress begin to negatively impact your personal, family or work life, it may indicate that the normal tools you use to combat stress are insufficient. Follow these guidelines to increase your ability to healthfully manage stress.

Identify the Cause of Stress

In order to manage your job-related stress more effectively, it's important to identify those things that are causing the stress. Common sources of job-related stress include:

- Work overload
- Lack of control – having high job demands but little control over how to meet those demands
- Fear for job security due to downsizing, dismissal, or forced early retirement
- Conflicts between home and work responsibilities
- Lack of support from supervisors and managers
- Reduced compensation, loss of benefits
- Conflicts with co-workers, supervisors or managers
- Difficulties adapting to changes in the work routine/environment
- Feeling that work is meaningless and boring



Knowing the cause(s) of your stress gives you the opportunity to correct or modify your behavior or environment to reduce the stress.

Identify the Negative Effects of Stress

Just as important as identifying the source of your stress is being able to identify the negative effects that stress can have on you. Common signs that your job is getting to you include:

- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Change in appetite
- Heart palpitations
- Headaches
- Back pain
- Nausea
- Loss of concentration
- Difficulty making decisions
- Inability to control anger
- Worry, anxiety or fear
- Irritability
- Depression
- Increased use of alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, drugs
- Increased eating

Avoid Stress-Promoting Thoughts and Beliefs

Quite often, we unknowingly increase our stress by carrying around “irrational beliefs” about what we should be able to accomplish or do in our jobs. Do any of these sound familiar?

- I should be able to do everything without feeling stressed or tired.
- I have to please others by doing what they ask me to do.
- I feel guilty if I take time for myself.
- I can't ask for help – it will show my incompetence.

While thoughts and beliefs such as those above are common, they are unrealistic and lead to undue frustration and stress. Become aware of your stress-promoting ways of thinking and replace them with more realistic and less stressful thoughts.

Tips for the Working Person

There are many things you can do to lessen the effects of stress in your life. The list below may be helpful in your fight against stress:

- When your circumstances at work make you angry or tense, take some steps toward resolving the problem. This gets you away from the “trapped feeling” that creates stress.
- Talk out your problems with a sympathetic and trustworthy friend. Often another person can help you see your problem in a new light, so you can work on a constructive solution.
- Build an effective and supportive relationship with your supervisor.
- Take your breaks and enjoy them. Walk outside, read something non-work related, or rest and put your feet up.
- Start your day with a nutritious breakfast. Avoid coffee or tea with caffeine. Caffeine increases the stress response of your body.
- Try deep breathing. You can reduce stress with proper breathing techniques. When you're “stressed out,” breathing will be rapid and shallow. To help relieve stress, slow down your breathing to a 7-second inhale and 8-second exhale. Do this for two minutes (about 8 repetitions of the cycle). Your tension will ebb.

Contact Your EAP

If you're having difficulty coping with stress, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for confidential counseling, referrals or information. A professional EAP counselor can help you address the cause(s) of your distress and help you learn effective ways to deal with stress. If you need help, why not call an EAP professional today? We're here to help.

WORKPLACE TIP

How To Build A Better Relationship With Your Boss

Below are some ideas that can help you develop a more effective relationship with your boss:



- Schedule time to talk with your boss one on one. Try to get a sense of your boss' personality and when it's best to approach your boss to talk. Make an effort to learn how to best communicate with him/her. Remember, bosses are people doing their job just like you.
- Bring problems to your boss in person and in private. Don't challenge him/her openly, in front of co-workers or other management.
- Let your boss know that you appreciate the things he/she does and how difficult many of his/her decisions are.
- If you disagree with a new procedure or rule, go to your boss with alternatives and solutions, not recriminations and a bad attitude.
- Do your job as a professional and build a reputation as someone who gets things done without complaint or problems. This type of reputation will give you credibility with your superiors that you cannot achieve in any other way. It also allows you to disagree sometimes, without coming off as a trouble maker.
- Learn to pick your battles. There are times when it is just better to keep quiet and do what you are told. Not every battle is worth fighting and winning can cost you more in the end than the battle was worth.
- Take responsibility for your mistakes and show your boss that you are big enough to admit when you are wrong.
- Be a team player. Bring positive information to your boss about co-workers or jobs well done and not always complaints and difficulties. Commiserate with him/her about a tough day or reminisce about common experiences that you shared on the job.
- Don't go over your boss' head with an issue or problem without talking to him/her about it first. No one likes it when people go behind their backs. You wouldn't like it and your boss won't either.

Your EAP is Here to Help

Remember, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can help you with workplace issues. We provide CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals or information to help you face the challenges in your life. We're here to help you.

For Your Information

TAKE A BREAK

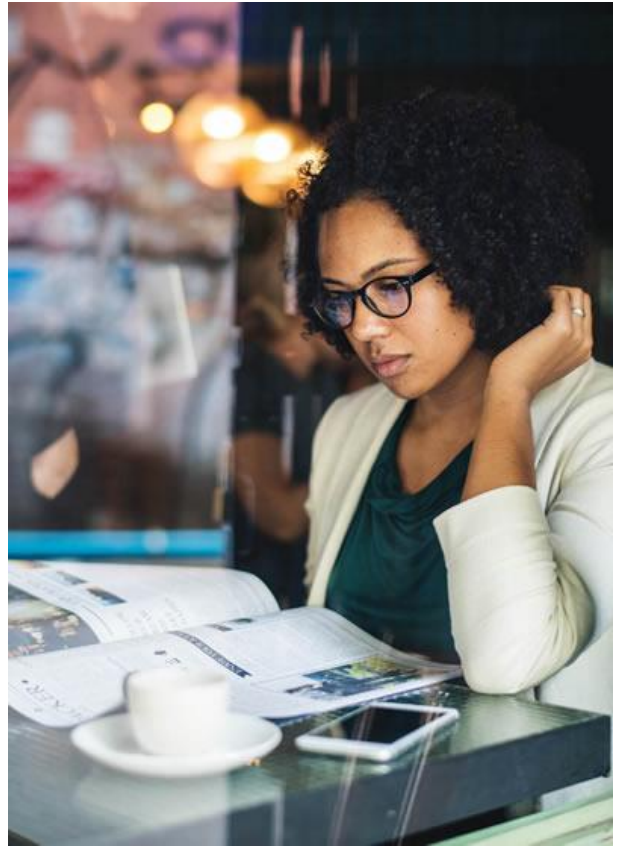
Block out time in your daily schedule to take a break. A Harvard Medical School study says as little as 10 to 15 minutes a day of private time can cut down on stress, headaches, colds, poor sleep and increase your productivity.

BETTER COMMUNICATION FOR COUPLES

For better communication, do not be invested in having to be right all of the time. Being right is not the point. If you must be right, you are not able to listen nor communicate because you have set up a barrier already. If you are always right that means the other person is always wrong. This cannot be true.

WEIGHT LOSS TIP

Don't rely on exercise alone to lose weight; combine exercise and diet. According to a review of 43 weight-loss studies dating back to 1995, exercise alone won't help you lose weight if you continue eating an unhealthy diet. The review concluded that a healthy diet actually does more to promote weight loss than exercise. Exercise, however, is a key factor in keeping weight off once it is lost.



Employee Assistance Program Services

PROVIDED BY YOUR EMPLOYER FOR YOU AND YOUR DEPENDENTS

Your Employee Assistance Program is a prepaid and confidential program designed to help employees and their dependents resolve problems which may be interfering with their personal, work or home life. ESPȲR offers help for marital and family issues, substance abuse, job concerns, emotional problems, life adjustments, legal issues, financial matters, and elder care and child care referrals.

If you're experiencing problems which are causing concern, you and your EAP Counselor can work as a team to find solutions.

For assistance, please visit our website www.espyr.com or call ESPȲR at: (888) 960-3305.