

# INSPIRED

## To Make Healthy Choices

### Sleep is an important part of staying healthy.

Our sleep occurs in cycles, repeating three stages of non-REM (rapid eye movement) sleep followed by REM stage sleep. When we sleep well, we wake up feeling refreshed and alert for our daily activities.

#### Daily adequate sleep is necessary to:

- Flush out the cellular debris in the brain generated by metabolic activity during our waking hours
- Lower stress
- Fight off infection
- Support the metabolism of sugar to prevent diabetes
- Improve attention, learning and creativity
- Perform well in school and work
- Work effectively and safely

Considering this and many other ways sleep impacts our normal functioning, it is not surprising that we spend a third of our lives sleeping.

The generally recommended amount of sleep hours per day is at least 10 for school-aged children, 9-10 for teens and 7-8 hours per day for adults. **Sufficient sleep duration requirements vary across the lifespan and from person to person.** Scientists still don't know what determines how much sleep an individual needs.

Sleep health is a common problem for adults, with **25% reporting insufficient sleep or rest at least 15 out of every 30 days.** Nearly 40% of adults report falling asleep during the day without meaning to at least once a month.

CDC estimates that approximately 80 million of Americans are having issues with sleeping.

#### Lack of sleep negatively impacts:

- Perception and judgment
- Efficiency and productivity
- Concentration and making decisions
- Coping with change
- Solving problems
- Controlling own emotions and behavior

Chronic sleep deprivation has been identified as a risk factor for **Alzheimer's disease**. Sleep disorders and chronic short sleep (defined as someone who sleeps less than 6 hours a night) are associated with an **increased risk of:**

- Heart disease
- High blood pressure and stroke
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Temporary fatigue
- Disorientation

Lack of sleep may also lead to **micro-sleep, brief moments of sleep (1-30 seconds) where you fail to respond to some sensory input and become unconscious, that occur when you're normally awake.** Have you ever driven and not remembered part of the trip? If so, you may have experienced micro-sleep. This is especially dangerous when driving. Driver sleepiness is a factor in over 100,000 car accidents each year.

#### To improve sleep habits, it may help to:

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. Try to keep the same sleep schedule on weeknights and weekends to avoid disrupting your body clock's sleep-wake rhythm.
- Use the hour before bed for quiet time.
- Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual.
- Turn off electronics before bed.
- Avoid heavy or large meals within a couple hours of bedtime.
- Avoid alcoholic drinks before bed.

Alcohol disrupts sleep patterns.

- Avoid nicotine and caffeine; both are stimulants that can keep you awake.
- Spend time outside every day (when possible) and be physically active.
- Keep your bedroom quiet, cool and dark (a dim night light is fine, if needed).

If you're worried about whether you're getting enough sleep, try keeping a sleep diary for a couple of weeks. **Track how many hours you slept and how sleepy you are during the day. Discuss it with your doctor.**

**Your mind and body will be healthier and safer!**

If you fall asleep in less than 5 minutes, you are probably sleep deprived.

Drowsy driving was a factor in crashes that claimed about 5,000 lives last year.

Check your sleep score at [sleepfoundation.org](http://sleepfoundation.org)

Find out more at [www.aasmnet.org](http://www.aasmnet.org) or [sleepassociation.org](http://sleepassociation.org).

For more information:  
**IMPORTANCE of SLEEP**  
[www.guideinc.org](http://www.guideinc.org)

