Wellness Tip // Sleep and Wellness

Getting adequate sleep can greatly impact your overall wellness. Read on to see if you are getting enough quality sleep, and for tips on improving your rest.

How Much Sleep Do I Need?

How much sleep we need changes with age. Teens need 8-10 hours of sleep each night. Lack of proper sleep affects their growth, academic performance, mood, and behavior. Adults 18-64 years of age require 7-9 hours of sleep. Sleep needs for older adults may slightly diminish with age.

Sleep Quality

The amount of sleep you get each night is important, but the quality of sleep you get is also an important factor in health and well-being. Good quality sleep is crucial to overall wellness. Poor sleep quality can include the following:

- Not feeling rested after getting the proper amount of sleep
- Waking up repeatedly during the night
- Experiencing sleep disorders such as snoring or gasping for air
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Struggling with staying awake during the day
- Having trouble controlling your emotions
- Slowed reaction times
- Being told by others that you look tired
- Requiring caffeinated beverages to keep you awake

If you are experiencing any of these on a regular basis, your sleep quality may be lacking. Improving sleep quality may be helped by creating better sleep habits, or being diagnosed and treated for sleep disorders.

Improve Your Sleep

The Mayo clinic suggests 7 ways to improve your sleep.

1. Stick to a sleep schedule.

Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends, holidays and days off. Being consistent reinforces your body's sleep-wake cycle.

2. Pay attention to what you eat and drink.

Don't go to bed either hungry or stuffed. Your discomfort might keep you up. Nicotine, caffeine and alcohol deserve caution, too. The stimulating effects of nicotine and caffeine take hours to wear off and can wreak havoc on quality sleep.

3. Create a bedtime ritual.

Do the same things each night to tell your body it's time to wind down. Some research suggests that screen time or other media use before bedtime interferes with sleep.

4. Get comfortable.

Create a room that's ideal for sleeping. Often, this means cool, dark and quiet. Consider using room-darkening shades, earplugs, a fan or other device to create an environment that suits your needs.

5. Limit daytime naps.

Long daytime naps can interfere with nighttime sleep — especially if you're struggling with insomnia or poor sleep quality at night. If you choose to nap during the day, limit yourself to about 10 to 30 minutes and make it during the mid-afternoon.

6. Include physical activity in your daily routine.

Regular physical activity can promote better sleep, helping you to fall asleep faster and enjoy a deeper sleep. Timing is important, if you exercise too close to bedtime, you might be too energized to fall asleep.

7. Manage stress.

When you have too much to do — and too much to think about — your sleep is likely to suffer. To help restore peace, consider healthy ways to manage stress. Before bed, jot down what's on your mind and then set it aside for tomorrow.

This article was written by Cindy Nelson, Utah State University Extension assistant professor