Are you getting enough sleep?

Here’s what you should know

How many hours of shut-eye did you get last night? Americans average about 6.8 hours with 40% banking less than six hours. Our sleeplessness has been fueled by technologies like the light bulb, TV, and the Internet, which give us more ways to stay awake 24/7. Reports have linked a lack of sleep to depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cancer and Alzheimer’s disease.2

Not getting enough sleep hurts you and others.3,4

- Impacts performance, including the ability to think clearly, react quickly and form memories
- Affects mood, leading to irritability and can lead to depression
- Can cause relationship problems, especially for children and teenagers
- Plays a role in blood pressure, sugar levels and inflammation control
- Increases the risk of heart disease and respiratory diseases
- Prevents the body from strengthening its immune system
- Can be dangerous – drowsy driving causes thousands of car crashes
- Magnifies the effects of alcohol

Tips for getting a good night’s sleep5

1. Stick to a sleep schedule. Try to be consistent between weekdays and weekends.
2. Pay attention to what you eat and drink. Nicotine and caffeine can take hours to wear off; alcohol might make you feel sleepy, but can disrupt your sleep later on.
3. Create a restful environment. Avoid prolonged use of light-emitting screens just before bedtime.
4. Limit daytime naps to 30 minutes. And avoid taking them late in the day.
5. Include physical activity in your daily routine, but avoid being active close to bedtime.
6. Manage your worries. Stress management and meditation can help ease anxiety.

Sources:
1. BEST LIFE website: This Is How Much Sleep the Average American Gets (accessed January 2019): http://bestlifeonline.com

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How much sleep do you need?*

It varies from person to person. But if you’re feeling drowsy during the day you haven’t had enough sleep.

- **Adults**: Most adults need seven to nine hours of sleep, although some people need as few as six or as many as 10 hours each day.
- **Children and teens** On average, teens need 8½ to 9½ hours each day. School-aged children need nine to 10.
- **Pregnant women in their first three months of pregnancy**: They often need several hours more sleep each day than they needed before.

**Sleep disorders**

Most people go through sleeping problems once in a while due to stress, hectic schedules and other outside influences. But, when these issues occur on a regular basis and interfere with daily life, they may suggest a sleeping disorder. Speak to a doctor if you feel lack of sleep could be a problem for you.

- **Insomnia** – This is when you can’t fall asleep or remain asleep. It can be caused by jet lag, stress, anxiety, hormones or digestive problems.
- **Sleep apnea** – You have pauses in breathing during sleep. This is a serious medical condition that causes the body to take in less oxygen.
- **Parasomnias** – A group of disorders that cause abnormal movements and behaviors during sleep like sleepwalking, sleep talking, teeth grinding, nightmares and bedwetting.
- **Restless leg syndrome** – You have an overwhelming need to move the legs.
- **Narcolepsy** – “Sleep attacks” where you suddenly feel extremely tired and fall asleep without warning.

**Medical treatments for sleep disorders**

Treatment for sleep disorders generally include a combination of medical treatments and lifestyle changes. They include sleeping pills, melatonin supplements and breathing devices to changing your diet, reducing sugar intake, drinking less water before bedtime and eating smaller, low carbohydrate meals before going to sleep. It’s a good idea to speak with your doctor about your symptoms so you can find the solution that’s right for you.

For more information and tips on getting the zzzz’s you need, visit WebMD’s Healthy Sleep Health Center at webmd.com.