



The Wellness Watch

promoting healthy lifestyles

March 2015

Sleepless in America

More than 20% of Americans average less than 6 hours of sleep a night. Most people need between 7 and 8 hours of sleep to feel refreshed and function optimally.

The Effects of Lost Sleep

Sleep deficits have been linked with:

- Decreased: reaction time, memory, problem solving
- Poor work performance
- Accidents
- Heavy alcohol and tobacco use
- Mental health issues such as anger and depression
- Relationship problems
- Chronic diseases: heart disease, diabetes, obesity
- Less exercise, poor overall health, and an increased risk of early death

Causes of Sleep Deprivation

How we live affects how we sleep. Often, our sleep deficit is related to:

- Staying up late to do other things besides sleep: 24-hour television, the internet, email, etc.
- Too much caffeine, nicotine and alcohol
- Work stress: long work hours, night shifts, bringing work home
- Sleep disorders such as sleep apnea, insomnia and restless leg syndrome

Shift Work

Night shift workers may be the hardest hit by sleep problems. When compared to day shift workers they:

- are less able to stay alert
- have decreased job performance
- have more accidents
- Fall asleep during work - 20% of shift workers fall asleep during a single night shift vs. none during day and evening shift

What to Do?

Get a check-up. If you toss and turn most nights, or wake up un-rested, see your physician to find out if you're suffering from a sleep disorder. There are effective medications and treatments available to improve symptoms and quality of life for anyone who has a sleeping disorder.

The Dangers of Drowsiness Behind the Wheel

Driving while drowsy can be as dangerous as driving while intoxicated! The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration reports that **1,550 deaths** and **40,000 non-fatal injuries** are caused by drowsy driving crashes each year.

Tactics to a Good Night's Sleep

- ▶ **Keep a Regular Sleep Cycle:** Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- ▶ **Create a Sleep Haven:** Give yourself a comfortable sleep-centered bedroom.
- ▶ **Move the TV & other electronics** out of the bedroom.
- ▶ **Get Out and Exercise:** Regular exercise promotes a good night's sleep, but not just before bed.
- ▶ **Avoid Caffeine, Nicotine, and Alcohol:** They all disrupt your sleep cycle.
- ▶ **Quiet Your Mind:** Try yoga, meditation and breathing techniques to relax and relieve daily stress.
- ▶ **Avoid Eating Before Bed:** It throws off your internal clock and can also cause heartburn, indigestion and high energy levels.
- ▶ **Naps:** Avoid naps if you suffer from insomnia. If you do nap, limit it to no longer than 20 minutes.

Tech Corner

SleepBot App



- ◆ A full-featured sleep-tracking app.
- ◆ Uses your Android or iPhone's built-in accelerometer to track your sleep habits.
- ◆ The intelligent alarm clock determines when to wake you up during light sleep within a 30 minute window.
- ◆ Record your movements and sounds during the night and wake up better each morning .

The Link Between Sleep and Weight

Sleep deprivation lowers appetite regulating hormone levels, increasing appetite. This can lead to overeating and weight gain. Choose nutritious, lower calorie foods to keep your sleep schedule and weight on-track.

Featured Nutrient: Tryptophan

Many foods contain naturally occurring substances that bring on sleep. One of these substances is tryptophan, a sleep-enhancing amino acid that helps make serotonin and melatonin (the “body clock” hormone that sets your sleep-wake cycles).

Because carbohydrates make tryptophan more available to the brain, a small, all-carbohydrate snack (no more than 30 grams of carbohydrates) in combination with the tryptophan stored in your body from food you've already eaten will give you the biggest boost of sleep inducing serotonin.

Foods high in tryptophan include:

- ◆ **Dairy products** - milk, cheese, and yogurt also contain calcium, which helps the brain use the tryptophan to make sleep-triggering melatonin
- ◆ **Chicken and turkey**
- ◆ **Walnuts and other nuts and seeds** - also contain their own source of melatonin
- ◆ **Fish** - tuna, halibut, and salmon are high in vitamin B6, which your body needs to make melatonin and serotonin
- ◆ **Shellfish** - Shrimp, crab and lobster are other good sources of tryptophan
- ◆ **Chickpeas, other beans and lentils** - also contain vitamin B6



So, for a good nights sleep, eat plenty of high tryptophan foods throughout the day followed by a light, 30 gram carbohydrate snack, just before bed.

Fit Tip: Upper and Mid Back Strengthening

Last month you learned how to stretch out your chest muscles. Now it's time to learn how to strengthen the muscles in your upper and mid back. Keeping these muscles strong helps you maintain good posture.

How Many to Do:

- If you have not been exercising, start with one set of 5-10 repetitions every other day.
- As you feel able, gradually build up to two sets of 10 repetitions every-other-day.
- **Do not perform this exercise if it causes pain.**

T's, I's and Y's

Begin all of these exercises on your stomach with your head supported on a rolled towel to keep your neck in a neutral position. You may want to place a pillow under your pelvis to keep your low back comfortable.

- **T's** – with thumbs facing towards ceiling, squeeze shoulder blades together and raise arms. Keep arms in line with shoulders.
- **I's** – raise arms up slightly at sides, squeezing shoulder blades together while drawing them down towards your waist.
- **Y's** – start with arms overhead and thumbs facing up. Lift arms off surface several inches.



Rows

Kneeling Rows – can be done with hand weights or other objects around the house like a large book, jug of milk, can of vegetables, etc.

Rows can also be done with an elastic band or tube. You may do these seated, as pictured, or standing with band secured to a sturdy object.

