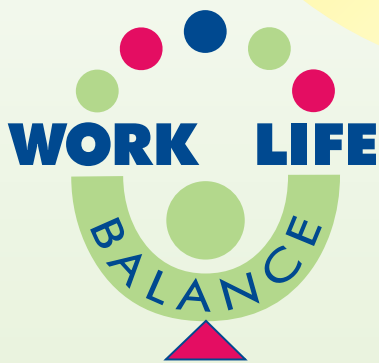


THE ABC'S OF GETTING YOUR ZZZ'S

In today's busy world with our hectic schedules, there just doesn't seem to be enough time in the day to get everything done.



From time to time, we've all been guilty of cutting into our sleep time to finish a task. Regardless of the reason, it's important to recognize that sleep is fundamental to maintaining our physical and emotional well-being. Lack of sleep can reduce our response time, visual acuity, and judgment. It also leaves us feeling irritable the next day, which can affect our relationships, both at work and at home. Over time, lack of adequate sleep puts us at a greater risk of developing high blood pressure, cardiovascular problems, and diabetes*.

How Much Sleep Do I Need?

Researchers generally recommend getting between 7-9 hours of continuous, uninterrupted sleep each night for the average adult **. The best way to tell if you're getting enough sleep is to pay close attention to how you feel in the morning. Do you feel refreshed and ready for the day ahead? Are you alert throughout the entire day? If not, consider the following suggestions to help you get a good night's rest:

1. Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day

- Our bodies are regulated by strong internal signals, called "circadian rhythms". These circadian rhythms cycle approximately once every 25 hours and control body temperature, hormone levels, and other biological functions. By maintaining a regular sleep schedule, we are providing a strong cue that helps reset our internal clocks each day.

2. Establish a sleep ritual

- These are regular habits you do before bed which signal to your body that it is time to sleep. Examples include preparing lunch for yourself and/or members of your family, brushing your teeth, going to the bath room, etc. If you've had a hectic day, allow for some quiet time to relax before bed.

3. Create a comfortable sleep environment

- Make sure that your bedroom is dark, quiet, clean, and at a comfortable temperature. Purchase comfortable pillows and check your mattress to see if it is firm and supportive. If you're tempted to keep track of time while in bed, move the alarm clock to a place that is out of sight.
- Remove all distractions from the sleeping environment. This includes any work materials, televisions, computers etc.

4. Don't count sheep!

- If you don't fall asleep within 15-20 minutes of lying down, get up and read or engage in another quiet activity until you become sleepy.

5. Avoid caffeine and nicotine a few hours before bed

- Both are stimulants that make you more alert and less able to fall asleep. In addition, they may also disrupt the quality of your sleep.

6. Avoid alcohol close to bedtime

- Alcohol may help you fall asleep, but it too can disrupt the quality of sleep leaving you tired the next day.

7. Exercise Regularly

- Exercise makes it easier to fall asleep and can also deepen your sleep. Health Canada recommends accumulating 60 minutes of light activity every day, or 30 minutes of moderate activity, 4 days a week, to stay healthy or to improve your health.
- Some researchers believe that exercising close to bedtime will impair sleep while others believe that it has no effect. Choose a time that works for you and enjoy being active on a regular basis.

8. Avoid large meals and restrict your fluids before bed

- If you are hungry, eat a light snack that is low in protein and fat (e.g. small bowl of cereal or low fat crackers with milk -1% or skim).
- Restrict your fluid intake to prevent trips to the bathroom during the night.

9. Communicate your sleep schedule to family and friends

- Phone calls and other interruptions can impair the quality of sleep, or make it difficult to fall back to sleep.
- If the message is not urgent, encourage family and friends to either send you an e-mail or call when you are normally awake.

If no amount of sleep leaves you feeling refreshed or if you are having problems staying asleep, talk to your family doctor. This may indicate that you have a clinical sleep disorder or may be a sign of depression.

Shiftwork & Sleep

Visit the Canadian Sleep Society website and download their brochure "Strategies for Shiftworkers and Sleep" www.css.to/sleep/brochures.htm