



Take Time for Sleep

A common myth is that we can learn to get by on little sleep with no downside. In reality, getting enough quality sleep is vital for your health, including your heart health.

When you sleep, your body is busy repairing your heart and blood vessels. Your brain is truly getting ready for the next day, forming new pathways to help you learn and remember information.

Getting too little sleep increases your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, and other conditions.

People may differ in how much sleep they need, but most adults need 7 to 8 hours each night. Children ages 6 to 12 need 9 to 12 hours, and teens need 8 to 10 hours. About 46 percent of African American adults get less than 7 hours of sleep most nights.

When you don't get enough quality sleep:

- You feel hungrier! A hormone in your body that makes you feel hungry increases and a hormone that makes you feel full decreases.
- Your blood sugar levels increase, which can increase your risk for diabetes.
- Your body doesn't fight off germs as well.
- You don't do as well at work or school, but you may not even be aware of it.
- You're more likely to have an accident. Being sleepy harms your driving ability as much as, or more than, being drunk

It's not just the quantity but also the quality of your sleep that matters. If you can't sleep at regular times (for example, if you work different shifts), you may have the same problems as someone who gets too few hours of sleep. That's also true if you get woken up a lot when you're trying to sleep—a common problem for new parents and for caregivers.





Take Time for Sleep (continued)

Tips for Getting a Good Night's Sleep

- Plan your day so you make time for sleep. Skimping on sleep makes you less productive.
- Natural light helps with sleep, so try to go outside every day.
- Get physical activity every day, just not too late in the day.
- Limit naps or take them early in the afternoon. Nap for no more than 20 minutes.
- No screen time before bedtime! Try not to look at your computer, phone, or TV an hour or so before bed. The light from these devices makes your brain think it's time to be awake.
- Don't eat a heavy or large meal, drink alcohol, have caffeine, or smoke soon before bed. Caffeine in sodas and coffee can take 8 hours to leave your body.
- Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day, even on the weekends. Limit the difference to an hour or less.
- Keep your bedroom quiet, cool, and dark (a dim night light is fine, if needed).
- Relax before bed. A warm bath may help.

Strategies for Shift Workers

If you're a shift worker, here are some tips just for you:

- Use bright lights at work.
- Talk to your employer about limiting shift changes as much as possible.
- Limit caffeine to the first part of your shift.

If you need to sleep during the day, use light-blocking curtains.

- If you're still not able to fall asleep when you need to or have problems getting used to a shift-work schedule, talk with your health care provider about other options to help you.

Sleep Apnea

One common cause of poor sleep is sleep apnea. If you have sleep apnea, your breathing stops briefly or becomes very shallow during sleep. Sleep apnea is particularly common among African Americans. Loud, frequent snoring can be a sign of sleep apnea. Obesity is *one* cause of sleep apnea, but people who aren't overweight can have sleep apnea also.

If you're tired during the day, even after spending enough time in bed at night, you may have sleep apnea or another sleep disorder. Talk to your health care provider. It's important to get help if you aren't sleeping well.