

10 Reasons Why Good Sleep Is Important

A good night's sleep is incredibly important for your health.

In fact, it's just as important as eating healthy and exercising.

Unfortunately, the Western environment is interfering with natural sleep patterns.

People are now sleeping less than they did in the past, and sleep quality has decreased as well. Here are 10 reasons why good sleep is important.

1. Poor Sleep Can Make You Fat

Poor sleep is strongly linked to weight gain.

People with short sleep duration tend to weigh significantly more than those who get adequate sleep.

In fact, short sleep duration is one of the strongest risk factors for obesity.

In one extensive review study, children and adults with short sleep duration were 89% and 55% more likely to become obese, respectively.

The effect of sleep on weight gain is believed to be mediated by numerous factors, including hormones and motivation to exercise.

If you're trying to lose weight, getting quality sleep is absolutely crucial.

SUMMARY

Short sleep duration is associated with a drastically increased risk of weight gain and obesity, in both children and adults.

2. Good Sleepers Tend to Eat Fewer Calories

Studies show that sleep-deprived individuals have a bigger appetite and tend to eat more calories.

Sleep deprivation disrupts the daily fluctuations in appetite hormones and is believed to cause poor appetite regulation.

This includes higher levels of ghrelin, the hormone that stimulates appetite, and reduced levels of leptin, the hormone that suppresses appetite.

SUMMARY

Poor sleep affects hormones that regulate appetite. Those who get adequate sleep tend to eat fewer calories than those who don't.

3. Good Sleep Can Improve Concentration and Productivity

Sleep is important for various aspects of brain function.

This includes cognition, concentration, productivity and performance.

All of these are negatively affected by sleep deprivation.

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A study on medical interns provides a good example.

Interns on a traditional schedule with extended work hours of more than 24 hours made 36% more serious medical errors than interns on a schedule that allowed more sleep.

Another study found that short sleep can negatively impact some aspects of brain function to a similar degree as alcohol intoxication.

On the other hand, good sleep has been shown to improve problem-solving skills and enhance memory performance of both children and adults.

SUMMARY

Good sleep can maximize problem-solving skills and enhance memory. Poor sleep has been shown to impair brain function.

4. Good Sleep Can Maximize Athletic Performance

Sleep has been shown to enhance athletic performance.

In a study on basketball players, longer sleep was shown to significantly improve speed, accuracy, reaction times and mental wellbeing.

Less sleep duration has also been associated with poor exercise performance and functional limitation in elderly women.

A study in over 2,800 women found that poor sleep was linked to slower walking, lower grip strength and greater difficulty performing independent activities.

SUMMARY

Longer sleep has been shown to improve many aspects of athletic and physical performance.

5. Poor Sleepers Have a Greater Risk of Heart Disease and Stroke

It's known that sleep quality and duration can have a major effect on many health risk factors.

These are the factors believed to drive chronic diseases, including heart disease.

A review of 15 studies found that people who don't get enough sleep are at far greater risk of heart disease or stroke than those who sleep 7–8 hours per night.

SUMMARY

Sleeping less than 7–8 hours per night is linked to an increased risk of heart disease and stroke.

6. Sleep Affects Glucose Metabolism and Type 2 Diabetes Risk

Experimental sleep restriction affects blood sugar and reduces insulin sensitivity.

In a study in healthy young men, restricting sleep to four hours per night for six nights in a row caused symptoms of prediabetes.

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These symptoms resolved after one week of increased sleep duration.

Poor sleep habits are also strongly linked to adverse effects on blood sugar in the general population.

Those sleeping less than six hours per night have repeatedly been shown to be at an increased risk of type 2 diabetes.

SUMMARY

Sleep deprivation can cause prediabetes in healthy adults in as little as six days. Many studies show a strong link between short sleep duration and type 2 diabetes.

7. Poor Sleep Is Linked to Depression

Mental health issues, such as depression, are strongly linked to poor sleep quality and sleeping disorders.

It has been estimated that 90% of people with depression complain about sleep quality.

Poor sleep is even associated with an increased risk of death by suicide.

Those with sleeping disorders like insomnia or obstructive sleep apnea also report significantly higher rates of depression than those without.

SUMMARY

Poor sleeping patterns are strongly linked to depression, particularly for those with a sleeping disorder.

8. Sleep Improves Your Immune Function

Even a small loss of sleep has been shown to impair immune function.

One large two-week study monitored the development of the common cold after giving people nasal drops with the cold virus.

They found that those who slept less than seven hours were almost three times more likely to develop a cold than those who slept eight hours or more.

If you often get colds, ensuring that you get at least eight hours of sleep per night could be very helpful. Eating more garlic can help as well.

SUMMARY

Getting at least eight hours of sleep can improve your immune function and help fight the common cold.

9. Poor Sleep Is Linked to Increased Inflammation

Sleep can have a major effect on inflammation in your body.

In fact, sleep loss is known to activate undesirable markers of inflammation and cell damage.

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Poor sleep has been strongly linked to long-term inflammation of the digestive tract, in disorders known as inflammatory bowel diseases.

One study observed that sleep-deprived people with Crohn's disease were twice as likely to relapse as patients who slept well.

Researchers are even recommending sleep evaluation to help predict outcomes in individuals with long-term inflammatory issues.

SUMMARY

Sleep affects your body's inflammatory responses. Poor sleep is strongly linked to inflammatory bowel diseases and can increase your risk of disease recurrence.

10. Sleep Affects Emotions and Social Interactions

Sleep loss reduces your ability to interact socially.

Several studies confirmed this using emotional facial recognition tests.

One study found that people who had not slept had a reduced ability to recognize expressions of anger and happiness.

Researchers believe that poor sleep affects your ability to recognize important social cues and process emotional information.

SUMMARY

Sleep deprivation may reduce your social skills and ability to recognize people's emotional expressions.

The Bottom Line

Along with nutrition and exercise, good sleep is one of the pillars of health.

You simply cannot achieve optimal health without taking care of your sleep.

Is Your Child Getting a Good Night's Sleep?

Children aged 10 to 12 are going through big changes in their body and require 9-11 hours of sleep per night. This often doesn't happen, causing excessive tiredness, irritability, behavioural problems and issues around concentrating in class.

The following steps should form part of daily routines, becoming life long skills as we continue to live in a technology driven world. It doesn't mean we don't use technology or that it is bad, it's about BALANCE and honouring our body's needs.

- No iPhones, iPads or TV just before bed. This is important because iPhones, iPads and TVs emit blue light with makes it harder to fall asleep. Blue light affects the hormone Melatonin. Melatonin is responsible for making you feel sleepy and blue light slows that process.
- No soft drink before bed. The caffeine in soft drinks can make it hard for kids to fall and stay asleep.
- Have a comfortable temperature in their room. The body cools down while sleeping, so having a too hot or cold room could make going to sleep harder.
- Have a sleep schedule. Having the same amount of sleep per night is proven to have a good impact on health.
- Exercising for more than one hour before bed might affect sleep a little (but not as much as the other things that I have listed).
- Put all electronic devices into "Flight Mode" or remove them from the room entirely. Make sure they are not sitting on a night stand right next to the child's head. Also move other electronic devices such as digital alarm clocks as far away from the child's head as possible.
- Add a Salt Lamp or Diffuser with essential oils to the room to help purify the air and create a sense of calm and restfulness.
- Turn off the household WIFI at night when everyone goes to bed. Most routers have a switch to allow the modem to continue running but the WIFI is switched off.

This list is a basic "To-Do" list, suitable for all members of the household. However, if this returns little to no relief to sleep issues, there may be other areas that need addressing. This includes nutrient deficiencies, hormonal imbalances or toxicity. Seeing a holistic natural health practitioner can help with rebalancing and detoxification, resulting in naturally occurring deeper and more restful sleep.

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