

Why Do You Need Sleep?

Sleep is not merely a “time out” from our busy routines; it is essential for good health, mental and emotional functioning and safety. For instance, researchers have found that people with chronic insomnia are more likely than others to develop several kinds of psychiatric problems and are also likely to make greater use of healthcare services.

People suffering from a sleep disorder called sleep apnea are at risk for high blood pressure, heart attacks, stroke and motor vehicle crashes if left untreated.

Even occasional sleeping problems can make daily life feel more stressful or cause you to be less productive. In a National Sleep Foundation survey, those who said they had trouble getting enough sleep reported a greater difficulty concentrating, accomplishing required tasks and handling minor irritations. Overall, sleep loss has been found to impair the ability to perform tasks involving memory, learning and logical reasoning. This may contribute to mistakes, unfulfilled potential at school or on the job and strained relationships at home. In fact, sleeplessness has been found to be a significant predictor of absenteeism. The direct and indirect impact of daytime sleepiness and sleep disorders on the economy is estimated to be \$100 billion annually in lost productivity, medical expenses and sick leave. On a personal level, we all know how miserable we feel after a night of poor sleep.

Insufficient sleep can also be extremely dangerous, leading to serious or even fatal accidents. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that each year more than 100,000 auto crashes, 71,000 injuries and more than 1,500 deaths are fatigue related.

Despite the fact that at least 40 million Americans report having sleep problems, more than 60% of adults have never been asked about the quality of their sleep by a physician and fewer than 20% have ever initiated a discussion about it. Clearly, sleep’s impact on health and well being is under-recognized.

Here are a few tips to help you get a good night’s sleep:

- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol in the late afternoon and evening. Caffeine and nicotine can delay your sleep, and alcohol may interrupt your sleep later in the night.
- Exercise regularly but do so at least three hours before bedtime. A workout after that time may actually keep you awake because your body has not had a chance to cool down.
- If you have trouble sleeping when you go to bed, don’t nap during the day, since it affects your ability to sleep at night.
- Consider your sleep environment. Make sure it’s pleasant, comfortable, dark and quiet.
- Establish a consistent, relaxing bedtime routine – even on weekends – that allows you to unwind and send a “signal” to your brain that it’s time to sleep. Avoiding exposure to bright lights before bedtime and taking a hot bath may also help.
- If you can’t fall asleep after 30 minutes, don’t stay in bed tossing and turning. Get up and involve yourself in a relaxing activity, such as listening to soothing music or reading, until you feel sleepy.

QuickTakes

Sleep: How Much Is Enough?



Studies suggest that the optimal amount to perform adequately, avoid sleep debt and avoid sleepiness during the day is 7-9 hours for adults. School aged children and adolescents should get about 9-11 hours.

- Keep to a regular sleep schedule to help regulate your body.
- One less hour of sleep a night will affect your energy balance, ability to think and ability to respond quickly.
- It may take up to one week to adjust to travel through time zones.
- Too much lost sleep cannot be made up by sleeping late on weekends.

Source: National Sleep Foundation

Pick The Best Summer Produce

Juicy red strawberries, snappy green beans, lush aromatic peaches – Mother Nature’s fast food is at its most sumptuous in summer. Here’s the scoop on buying, storing and feasting on the season’s freshest produce.

CANTALOUPE

How To Pick ‘Em: Choose cantaloupe that feels heavy in your hand and sniff for a fragrant melon-y aroma.

Keep It Fresh: Store unripe cantaloupe at room temperature. Once ripe or cut, wrap in plastic and refrigerate.

Serving Tip: Toss a vibrant fruit salad by combining cantaloupe, berries and fresh mint.

CORN - SWEET

How To Pick ‘Em: Look for fresh, green husks with plump kernels that are not dried, discolored or shrunken.

Keep It Fresh: Fresh corn is highly perishable; cook it the day it’s picked if possible, or refrigerate 1-2 days in plastic with husks intact.

Serving Tip: Peel back corn husks and remove corn silk. Sprinkle the cobs with water and fold husks back over the kernels. Grill or roast for 10 minutes for a great nutty flavor.

EGGPLANT

How To Pick ‘Em: Choose eggplant that’s dark purple, smooth and free of bruises.

Keep It Fresh: Refrigerate in a sealed plastic bag; use within 5 days.

Serving Tip: Grill marinated skewers threaded with eggplant, tomatoes, zucchini and mushrooms.

PEACHES

How To Pick ‘Em: Look for plump, firm fruit with a rosy blush. Avoid peaches that are discolored, wrinkled or mushy.

Keep It Fresh: Store at room temperature in a closed paper bag. Refrigerate and store in plastic only when ripe. Eat within 5 days.

Serving Tip: For a sweet summer dessert, serve fresh sliced peaches with low-fat or nonfat yogurt or sour cream.

STRAWBERRIES

How To Pick ‘Em: Look for fresh, plump, firm, bright red berries. Avoid green/white berries.

Keep It Fresh: Cover and store at room temperature; eat immediately.

Serving Tip: For a cooling summer dessert, toss strawberries and mango pieces with a teaspoon of sugar and a squeeze of lime juice.

TOMATOES

How To Pick ‘Em: Buy firm, bright, fragrant tomatoes. Avoid any that are too soft or cracked.

Keep It Fresh: If too green, place on a windowsill to ripen. Store at room temperature and out of the sun. Eat within 4-7 days; refrigerate only when very ripe.

Serving Tip: Quickly broil thick tomato slices with garlic and basil.

WATERMELON

How To Pick ‘Em: Look for a symmetrical watermelon that feels heavy.

Keep It Fresh: Store uncut fruit at room temperature. Refrigerate and tightly wrap cut watermelon.

Serving Tip: Whizz cubes of watermelon with ice, fruit juice and honey in a blender for a refreshing smoothie.

Dilled Potato Salad

Makes: 4 servings | 30 - 60 minutes



Ingredients:

1 pound small red potatoes, scrubbed
1/2 cup nonfat plain yogurt
1/3 cup white wine vinegar
1 tsp. finely chopped shallots or scallions
2 tbs. chopped fresh dill, plus a few sprigs for garnish

2 tbs. snipped fresh chives
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

Nutritional Information (per serving):

120 Calories; 0g Saturated Fat; 5g Protein; 24g Carbohydrates;
2g Fiber; 274mg Sodium

Preparation:

1. Place potatoes in a large saucepan and add water to cover. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium and cook until potatoes are just tender, about 12 minutes. Drain potatoes and cut into quarters. Transfer to a bowl.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the yogurt, vinegar and shallots until blended. Add dill, chives, salt and pepper. Pour over potatoes and toss to mix. Chill for at least 30 minutes to allow flavors to blend.

Make Ahead Tip: This salad can be prepared several hours in advance then stored and covered in the refrigerator.