Sleep

Sleep is a vital, component of everyone's overall health and well-being as it enables the body to repair and reduces the risk of heart disease, diabetes and stroke. This is regardless of their age, weight, smoking and exercise habits.

Sleeping too little can disrupt underlying health conditions and negatively affect biological processes like blood pressure, glucose levels and inflammation. The same may be true for oversleeping. During sleep, your body repairs cells, stores new information in the brain and removes waste from it, along with restoring our energy.

For children and young people, sleep is important for their growth and development.

How Much Sleep do I need?

The following guidelines provide recommendations for how much sleep children and adults need while acknowledging that the ideal amount of sleep can vary from person to person.

Adults need around 7-9 hours of sleep a night

Children need around 10-12 hours of sleep a night.

Benefits of a Good Night Sleep

1. **Boosts immunity** – prolonged lack of sleep can disrupt your immune system, making it harder for your body to fight against infections.

2. **Maintain a healthy weight** – improving your sleeping patterns can help you maintain a healthy weight as it suppresses hunger and signals fullness in the brain.

3. **Improves mental wellbeing** – a single sleepless night can often make you irritable and moody the following day. Ongoing lack of sleep may lead to long-term mood disorders including anxiety and depression.

4. **Reduces the risk of diabetes** – lack of sleep can impact on blood sugar levels due to its effects on insulin, cortisol and oxidative stress.

5. **Reduces the risk of heart disease** – not getting enough sleep over a long period of time is associated with increased heart rate, high blood pressure and higher levels of chemicals linked with inflammation, which may put extra strain on your heart.

6. **Increases fertility** – sleep regulates important hormones in your body, including fertility-related hormones.

Tips for a Good Night Sleep

To help improve our sleeping patterns we need to influence our Circadian Rhythm. Your circadian rhythm is basically a 24-hour internal clock that is running in the background of your brain and cycles between sleepiness and alertness at regular intervals. It is also known as your sleep-wake cycle.

Melatonin, often referred to as the sleep hormone, is a central part of the body's sleep-wake cycle. Its production increases with evening darkness, promoting healthy sleep and helping to orient our circadian rhythm.

Did you know that what you do during the day can also improve the quality of your sleep?

1. **Exercise during the day or early evening.**

2. **Set a regular bedtime and waking-up time, including the weekend.**

3. **Try some foods that promote sleep such as bananas, cherries, oats and nuts.**

4. **Ensure your sleeping environment is comfortable including the temperature, having the room dark and tidy.**

5. **Avoid caffeine, technology and eating big meals late at night. Also avoid alcohol.**

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