

THE POWER OF SLEEP

WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT, AND HOW TO GET MORE OF IT

If your eating and exercise are on point but you still don't feel or look the way you want, poor sleep may be to blame. Here's how to make rest a daily priority.

5 SIGNS YOUR SLEEP HABITS AREN'T WORKING FOR YOU

YOUR MIND IS FOGGY

What we experience and learn gets cemented to memory while we sleep. Interference with this process causes:

- Reduced alertness and concentration
- Confusion
- Impaired judgement
- Forgetfulness

YOU'RE GETTING SICK A LOT

When we don't sleep enough, T-cells go down and inflammation goes up, resulting in:

- Increased vulnerability to viruses and bacteria
- Acute increase in risk of getting sick
- Increased risk of heart disease and other inflammation-related illnesses

YOUR WORKOUTS FEEL TOO HARD

Our body uses sleep as an opportunity to refresh neurotransmitter levels and remove energy-draining metabolites. Otherwise, we experience:

- Decreased central nervous system activity
- Slower reaction time
- Low energy and endurance capacity
- Depressed mood
- Reduced desire to exercise

YOU'RE UNHAPPY

While we sleep, we produce fresh neurotransmitters and regulate hormone production. Interference here causes:

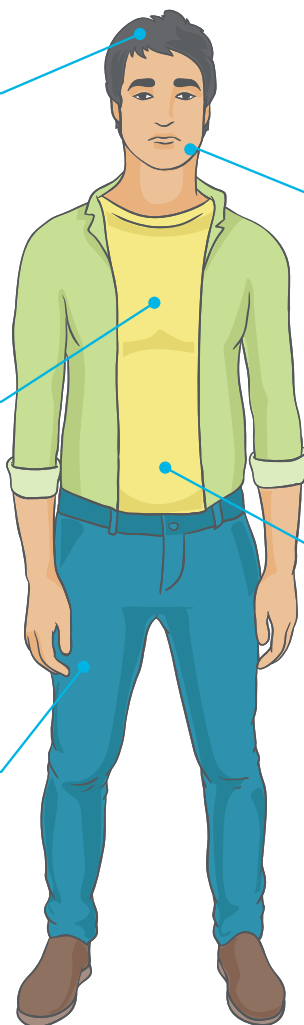
- Impaired regulation of emotions
- Heightened stress
- Low mood
- Possible increase in risk of depression

YOU'RE STRUGGLING WITH YOUR WEIGHT

Poor sleep is linked to excess body fat, as it can:

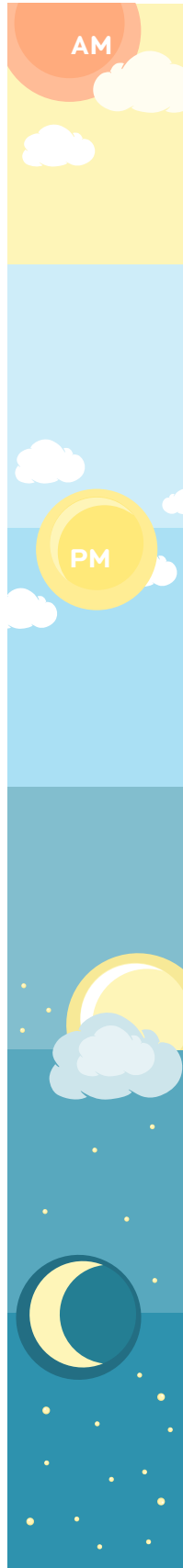
- Disrupt appetite regulation
- Cause you to feel hungrier
- Lead to increased calorie intake

Also, excess body fat can reduce sleep quality.



PREPARING FOR A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

As odd as it sounds, your path to high-quality sleep starts in the morning.



WAKE AT THE RIGHT TIME

You'll feel better and more alert if you wake from a light sleep stage. If you feel groggy, consider a device or app that senses sleep cycles and rouses you at an optimal point.



BE AWAKENED BY LIGHT

This naturally raises cortisol, which is a good thing in the morning. The slow rise helps you feel alert and relaxed.



GET MOVING RIGHT AWAY

Movement seems to speed the waking process, whereas hitting snooze increases sleep inertia. When it's time to wake, sit up and put your feet on the floor.



FIND THE SUN (OR A LIGHT THERAPY BOX)

Light exposure sets your daily melatonin (a sleep hormone) rhythm. This increases wakefulness during the day and helps your body gear down at bedtime.



BE CAREFUL OF ALCOHOL AND CAFFEINE

Consuming caffeine after 2pm and/or having more than 1-2 drinks in the evening can interfere with deep sleep.



EXERCISE

Regular exercise helps normalize your body's 24-hour clock, regulate your fight-or-flight system, and optimize your hormone levels. However, be careful with very intense exercise later in the evening. It may make it harder to fall asleep.



EAT A SMALL TO MEDIUM DINNER

Too much food can make it harder to fall asleep. A blend of minimally processed proteins, carbs, and fats can help keep you satisfied until morning. Plus, having some slow-digesting carbs can make you feel sleepy.



LIMIT FLUIDS

Drinking too much liquid shortly before bed can result in frequent waking for bathroom breaks.



CLEAR YOUR MIND

Whatever thoughts are in your head, get them out and onto paper. This preps you for genuine relaxation.



GO THE \$%#@ TO BED

Sticking to a reasonable bedtime teaches your body when to release calming hormones to help you fall asleep. Tip: Don't wait until midnight. Every hour of sleep before 12am is worth two hours after.



SLEEP AT LEAST SEVEN HOURS

Most people need 7-9 hours of sleep per night. If you're getting far less now, that's okay. Just work your way up slowly. Even adding 30 minutes can make a big difference.





TURN OFF ELECTRONICS

Remove your eyes from all devices at least 30 minutes before bed. Artificial light interferes with our production of melatonin, which ensures deep sleep and may help regulate metabolism.



DE-STRESS

Reading, meditation, and gentle movement (stretching, yoga, walking, sex) can release tension and activate calm-down chemicals.



TAKE A BATH OR SHOWER

Warm water can help us relax and de-stress. Throw in some magnesium-based epsom salts, known to help with sleep.



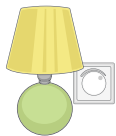
CREATE A RELAXING SLEEP AREA

Your bedroom should be quiet, peaceful, relatively organized, and free of anxiety-inducing clutter. If you live in an urban area, consider a white noise machine to drown out city sounds.



SET YOUR ROOM TO AN APPROPRIATE TEMPERATURE

Most people sleep better when it's cool (around 67 F); others sleep better at a neutral temperature. Find what works best for you.



MAKE THE ROOM AS DARK AS POSSIBLE

To maximize melatonin production, cover your windows and turn your phone face-down. Use a motion-sensitive or dim night light to illuminate mid-sleep bathroom trips.

*For the full article explaining this infographic:
<http://www.precisionnutrition.com/hacking-sleep>