

NATIONAL SLEEP AWARENESS

Did you know?

Sleepiness and fatigue can impair driving to similar effects as that of an intoxicated driver. According to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), staying up for 24 hours straight and then getting behind the wheel is equivalent to driving with a blood-alcohol content deemed legally drunk in all 50 states. National Sleep Awareness Week is March 6-12 this year. It is all about raising awareness about the importance of sleep to our health, safety, and productivity.

Why Sleep is Important

Sleep plays a vital role in feeling refreshed and is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Not only does sleep allow the body to rest and recover, but according to the NSF, we use sleep to strengthen or build new pathways in our brain. Studies show regular, quality sleep enhances memory and improves attention. When we are sleep deprived, our thinking processes can be slowed down and the ability to make good decisions or have a clear understanding may be compromised. Additionally, poor sleep can affect our mood. Resilience to stress is impaired by sleep deficiency. People who consistently miss out on sleep are also at a greater risk for developing depression.

Recommended Hours of Sleep

Everyone's sleep needs are different. Researchers have not yet found the exact amount of sleep we need. However, experts have estimated approximate numbers of hours of sleep for overall health and well-being. The NSF has recently fine-tuned sleep duration ranges. See below for current recommendations:

Age Group	Hours of Sleep
Newborn (0-3 months)	14-17 hours
Infant (4-11 months)	12-15 hours
Toddler (1-2 years)	11-14 hours
Pre-School (3-5 years)	10-13 hours
School Age (6-13 years)	9-11 hours

Teen (14-17 years)	8-10 hours
Young Adult (18-25 years)	7-9 hours
Adult (26-64 years)	7-9 hours
Older Adult (65+ years)	7-8 hours

Good Sleep Habits

Having healthy sleep habits is also referred to as having good "sleep hygiene." Following sleep practices on a consistent basis can make a big difference in establishing a normal, quality sleep schedule and daytime alertness. To improve your sleep habits, the following may be helpful:

1. Establish a regular sleep schedule of going to bed and waking at the same time every day.
2. Try to keep the same sleep schedule on weeknights and weekends.
3. Avoid daytime napping if possible. If you must nap, it is better to keep it short and before the evening.
4. Avoid alcohol and heavy or large meals within a couple hours of bedtime.
5. Avoid stimulants such as soda, tea, caffeine, or nicotine four to six hours before bed and minimize daytime use.
6. Practice a relaxing pre-sleep ritual to unwind right before bed, such as quiet time one hour before bed.
7. Avoid bright light, such as from a television, cell phone, or computer screen. Light may falsely signal the brain that it is time to be awake.
8. Associate your bed with sleep. Not for television, listening to the radio, or reading.
9. Keep your bedroom peaceful, quiet, cool, and dark.
10. Get regular exercise to help you fall asleep faster and sleep more soundly. Try to finish exercising at least a few hours before bed.

Talk to your doctor if you think you have a sleep disorder.

For informational purposes only; not meant to supersede the advice of a physician.
If you have questions regarding this information, please consult your medical professional.