

Are You Getting Your ZZZ's?

Sleep is a natural part of everyone's life, but many people don't realize how necessary it is, and some people try to get by with very little sleep. Sleep, like a healthy diet and exercise, is important for our minds and bodies to function properly. Children and adolescents need at least 9 hours of sleep per night and adults need at least 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night to function well.



Even if a person doesn't feel sleepy, getting an hour less sleep a night than our body needs can negatively affect our daytime performance, thinking, and mood, and cause us to fall asleep at inappropriate or dangerous times. Sleep-deprived adolescents and adults can put themselves at risk for drowsy driving or workplace accidents. Lack of sleep can also affect children's performance in school, sports and social relationships.

Be aware that substances containing caffeine, nicotine, alcohol and certain medications, can interfere with sleep routines. Anxiety and depression may also affect normal sleep patterns.

Adults who tend to snore a lot and feel chronically sleepy and have difficulty concentrating during the day may be suffering from sleep apnea, a disorder characterized by brief interruptions of breathing during sleep. Sleep apnea may increase a person's risk for high blood pressure, stroke and heart disease. If caught early, sleep apnea can be effectively treated by different methods. If you or a family member suffer from trouble falling asleep (insomnia), have difficulty maintaining normal sleep, or feel constantly sleepy during the day, contact your health care provider for further evaluation and treatment.

Source: *National Sleep Foundation*