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Are You Getting Enough Sleep?

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Did you know how much sleep you get might affect your ability to manage your weight? Sleep affects your mood, learning, memory and the hormones that control your appetite. Recent studies have noted that when we get less than seven hours of sleep a night, our bodies may produce more ghrelin, a hormone that stimulates appetite, and less leptin, a hormone that curbs our appetite.

Changes in hormonal levels are not the only way sleep and weight are connected. Carrying extra weight in the neck and chest areas can lead to breathing problems while sleeping. Some individuals may experience sleep apnea, a condition that causes them to stop breathing repeatedly during sleep.

March 7-13 is Sleep Awareness Week.

Here are some tips to help you develop good sleep habits:

Keep regular wake and bed times, when possible. Going to bed and waking up at the same times will help you fall asleep and sleep better.

Working out during the day, at least three hours before bedtime, can promote a restful sleep. Limit caffeine intake to morning or early afternoon hours. Consuming caffeinated products at dinner or later in the evening can make it harder to fall asleep at night.

Maintain a dark, cool environment in your bedroom. Turn off the lights and TV to calm your mind and unwind. Bedroom temps above 75 or below 54 degrees can disrupt sleep. Use relaxation techniques like deep breathing, guided imagery or tensing each of your muscle groups for 10 seconds and then relaxing each area to help calm your body.

Avoid eating or drinking large amounts of food within a couple hours of going to bed as this may lead to indigestion or restless sleep.

Consider getting a separate bed for your pets as cats or dogs that sleep in your bed may disrupt your sleep.

If you get routinely get a good night's sleep and consistently wake up feeling tired, talk with your doctor as this could signal a more serious medical condition.

Source: National Sleep Foundation