

the power of sleep

Does 8-10 hours of sleep every night seem like a dream to you? Would you believe it might be the most important health habit there is? Being sleep deprived could be just as bad for you as eating fast food every day or being sedentary. In truth, it could be the underlying reason driving those bad habits. Yet it remains a serious issue for so many adults and youth in America today, one often not taken seriously. **45% percent of Americans say that poor or insufficient sleep affected their daily activities at least once in the past seven days** (*National Sleep Foundation's 2014 Sleep Health Index™*). The report also revealed that Americans are sleeping an average of 7 1/2 hours a night; yet 35% report their sleep quality as "poor" or "only fair." 25% divulged that they did not wake up feeling refreshed on any of the past seven days. The research also indicates a direct link to poor health, with 67% of those with less than good sleep quality also reporting poor or only fair health. It's evident there is a need for awareness and better quality sleep. If you or someone you know needs further convincing, ask the following questions.

Do you want a longer life expectancy? When you look at all the health risks and potential costs of poor sleep habits, it's not surprising to see that it can ultimately affect life expectancy and long-term well-being. An analysis of data from three separate studies suggests that sleeping five or fewer hours per night may increase mortality risk by as much as 15%. (*National Academic Press, 2006.*)

Do you want to lower your risks of heart disease and diabetes? Research has shown that those who regularly get less than 5 hours of sleep a night had a greater increased risk of having or developing type 2 diabetes. Even modest sleep reduction of 6-7 hours a night has been shown to result in greater increased risks for heart disease and hypertension. Sleep apnea which is a fairly common sleep disorder, is also linked to higher risks of cardiovascular disease. (*Archives of Internal Medicine, 2005; National Sleep Foundation*)

Do you want to be more productive at work and want your kids to be more successful in school?

Creativity, performance, and ability to control emotions are all impaired when sleep deprived. In some work roles, lack of sleep is associated with success or almost seen as a badge of honor. We've got to stop seeing success and sleep as two opposing factors. They are completely interdependent. Sleep should be viewed as a performance-enhancer, without it long-term success will not be possible.

Do you want to have an easier time managing weight? One study found that people who slept fewer than six hours per night on a regular basis were much more likely to have excess body weight, while people who slept an average of eight hours per night had the lowest relative body fat of the study group. Sleep debt affects your hunger hormones, ghrelin and leptin, resulting in increased appetite. (*Archives of Internal Medicine, 2006*)

And the list goes on...It's time to put a good night's rest at the top of your to-do list! If you're not sure where to start, begin with 30 additional minutes of sleep each night. Most everyone can commit to that and find 30 minutes to spare. Make it a routine and build on that gradually!

We've Got to Learn When To Disconnect

"Work will still be there in the morning, a good night's sleep won't."

