

Sleep and Well-Being

Sleep is more than a Luxury! It's a necessity!

Together with eating well, being physically active, and engaging in stress management and self-care activities, sleep is a vital component of your well-being. Sleep deprivation impairs our ability to learn, remember and process new information, and is associated with a number of chronic diseases and conditions. Additionally, connections between sleep problems and mental health disorders like depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder have long been recognized. Sleep problems historically were seen as a symptom of these mental health challenges, but we now know that sleep deprivation can actually increase risk for mental health issues and challenges. The [Harvard Medical School Mental Health Letter on Sleep and Mental Health](#) is a great resource for more information on this topic. Recent

research published in the journal SLEEP (Prather, Janicki-Deverts, Hall and Cohen, 2015) also confirmed that not getting enough sleep leaves people significantly more vulnerable to illnesses like the common cold.

Many people think of sleep deprivation as just a part of the college experience, but most students can make changes in their habits, schedules and environments that would result in improved health, wellness and academic performance.



Getting Good, Quality Sleep

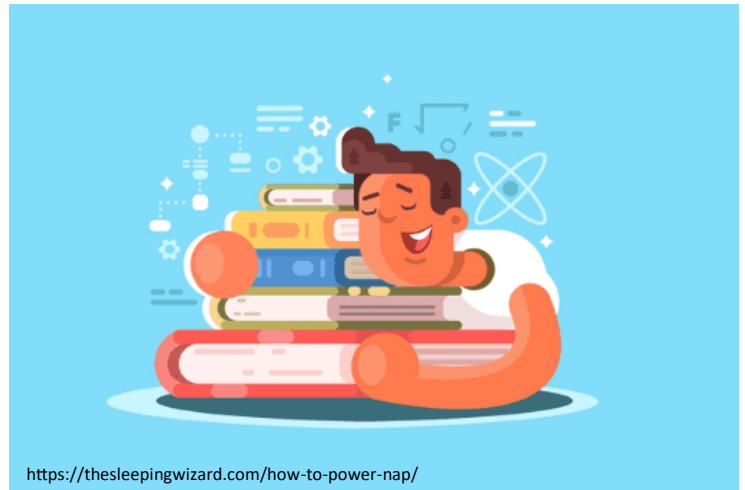
Research tells us that young adults need between seven and nine hours of sleep (National Sleep Foundation). Even if you're not getting seven hours of sleep each night, establishing good habits around sleep can maximize the benefit you receive from the sleep you do get.

- Avoid stimulants like caffeine and nicotine. The stimulating effects of caffeine in coffee, teas and chocolate can take as long as 8 hours to wear off!
- Have a good sleeping environment. Sleep in a quiet, dark and relaxing environment which is neither too hot nor too cold. Get rid of anything that might distract you from sleep, such as noises or bright lights.
- Make your bed your bastion of sleep! Use it only for sleep (and sex), and NOT for other activities like reading, watching movies or listening to music.
- Avoid large meals before bedtime.
- Avoid physical activity within a few hours of bedtime.
- Do your best to stick to a sleep schedule--go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.

When you aren't able to get enough sleep at night, a **POWER NAP** can make a big difference! Daytime naps can actually be a way to treat sleep deprivation. However, keep your eyes on the following tips to make the most of your naps.

- Nap-time! Prime napping hours are 1:00-3:00pm. If you start napping too close to bed-time, it will be hard to fall asleep at night.
- Make it quick! Don't sleep for more than 30 minutes or you're likely to feel groggy. The 20-minute power nap is good for boosting alertness.
- Block the light! Blocking out the light helps you fall asleep faster. Nap in a dark room or wear an eye mask.
- Stay warm. Your body temperature tends to drop while you sleep, so cuddle up with a blanket.

For more information about how to Balance Sleep and Study, check out this Guide by AF. If you experience persistent problems with sleep even when using good sleep hygiene practices like those above, see your medical provider for evaluation and recommendations.



Sources:

“College Health and Family.” CDC College Health and Family. August 18, 2015. Accessed September 25, 2015.

Prather, Janicki-Deverts, Hall and Cohen. “Behaviorally Assessed Sleep and Susceptibility to the Common Cold.” SLEEP 38, no. 9 (2015).

Soong, Jennifer. “The Secret (and Surprising) Power of Naps.” WebMD Power Naps. November 29, 2011. Accessed September 25, 2015.

“Sleep and Mental Health.” Harvard Medical School Mental Health Letter on Sleep. July 1, 2009. Accessed September 25, 2015.