Are you fully rested or sleep deprived?

Does it often take you more than 30 minutes to fall asleep at night? Do you wake up frequently during the night—or too early in the morning—and have a hard time going back to sleep? When you awaken, do you feel groggy and lethargic? Do you feel drowsy during the day—particularly during monotonous situations?

If you answered “yes” to any one of those questions, you may have a sleep deficit that is affecting you in ways you don’t even realize. And, you aren’t alone. The National Sleep Foundation (NSF) 2008 “Sleep in America” report indicated a majority of American adults experience sleep problems.

- 65% of those polled reported sleep problems—difficulty falling asleep, waking during the night, waking feeling unrefreshed; nearly 50% reported sleep problems almost every night
- 29% had fallen asleep at work or had become very sleepy at work during the month previous to the poll
- 36% had nodded off or fallen asleep driving; 26% report driving drowsy during the workday on a regular basis
- 29% said they use “alerting” medications
- 38% said they cope by eating foods high in sugar and carbohydrates
- 37% reported napping as a coping technique
- 5% said they use “alerting” medications

What are the biggest causes of sleep problems?

**Psychological factors**

Stress is considered by most sleep experts to be the “Number One” cause of sleep difficulties.

Common triggers include school—or job—related pressures, family or marriage problems, a serious illness or death in the family. Usually sleep problems will disappear once the stressful situation passes, however, if short-term sleep problems aren’t managed properly from the beginning, they can persist long after the original stress has passed.

**Lifestyle stressors**

You may be doing things during the day or evening that work against getting a good night’s sleep. Drinking alcohol or beverages containing caffeine in the afternoon or evening, exercising close to bedtime, not keeping a regular morning schedule, or working or doing other mentally intense activities right before bed can all impact your sleep.

**Shift work**

Shift work forces you to try to sleep when other activities are going on around you and your own biological rhythms signal you to be awake. In the NSF report, over 30% of shift workers reported getting a good night’s sleep only a few nights per month or less; 33% reported they sleep less than 6 hours per night on workdays.

**Environmental interferences**

A distracting sleep environment, such as a room that’s too hot/too cold, too noisy, or too brightly lit can be a barrier to sound sleep. Interruptions from children or other family members can also disrupt sleep. Other influences to pay attention to are the size and comfort of your bed, and the sleep habits of your partner—if you have to sleep next to someone who snores, can’t fall asleep/stay asleep or has other sleep difficulties, that can impact the quality of your sleep.

**Physical factors**

Physical problems can interfere with your sleep also. Conditions such as arthritis, other conditions that cause pain (such as backache) or other discomforts (Restless Leg Syndrome, pregnancy, hormonal shifts, PMS, menopause) can make it difficult to fall asleep or stay asleep. Sleep apnea, which is recognized by snoring and interrupted breathing, causes brief awakenings (often unnoticed) and excessive daytime sleepiness. Anyone who suspects sleep apnea should see a doctor immediately, as this condition can be life-threatening.

Medications, such as decongestants, steroids, some medications used to treat high blood pressure, asthma or depression can cause sleep problems as a side effect.

So, how much sleep does an adult need?

While sleep needs vary, most healthy adults need seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Some individuals feel they are able to function without sleepiness or drowsiness after as little as six hours of sleep, although the minimum reported by the majority in the NSF poll in order to feel at their best was 7 hours and 18 minutes of sleep. However, others don’t feel they’re at their peak performance unless they’ve slept 10 hours. And, contrary to popular myth, the need for sleep doesn’t decline with age, although the ability to get restoring sleep all at one time may be reduced.

Need some tips on how to get good sleep? See “Awake and Alert @ Work” in the News You Can Use section of this newsletter on page 4

“Sleep is the golden chain that ties health & our bodies together.”

—Thomas Dekker (1572–1632) Elizabethan dramatist and writer • Dekker also wrote the poem “Golden Slumbers,” the words of which were used as the lyrics for the Beatles song of the same name.

EASE@Work newsletters are for informational purposes only and should not replace the advice of a qualified health professional. If you would like to speak with a professional counselor, call EASE@Work: 216/241-3273 or 800/521-3273… We can help!
The sleepy teen

Does your teen have trouble waking up every morning? Does he/she sleep in late on weekends, or into the afternoon during the summer when you’re at work? Has your teen been caught falling asleep in class?

If these habits frustrate you as a parent, you’re not alone. Research shows that most teens do not get the sleep they need in order to be alert and productive. Furthermore, it’s no surprise that sleep deprivation affects academic performance, too. Research studies looking at children who consistently receive Cs, Ds and Fs show that these children have inconsistent or non-existent bedtimes.

And, while getting adequate sleep may be partially in your teen’s control, there may be other forces at work—physical changes that are not in their control.

In fact, in the book *Snooze…Or Lose! Ten “No War” Ways to Improve Your Teen’s Sleep Habits*, Dr. Helene A. Emselem, Director of the Sleep and Wake Disorders Center in Chevy Chase, Md., reports that “Two-thirds to three-fifths of teens experience an underlying shift in circadian rhythm (the body’s 24-hour biological clock), and some have great trouble because of it.” This shift allows teens to fight off sleep more easily in the evening and stay up later. The sleep pattern is then complicated further by having to get up early to get to school, when the teen’s body still wants rest. (Some schools have actually shifted their start times to later in the morning to accommodate this change in their teenage students’ bodies.)

Additionally, according to the Society of Neurosciences, the part of the brain responsible for judgment is the last to develop. “This, along with the impaired judgment that accompanies sleep deprivation, causes teenagers to believe they are indeed getting enough sleep,” as reported in “The Truth About Your Tired Teen,” www.NEOhioFamily.com, July 2008.

And, while you can’t control your teen’s developing brain and biological clock, there are some things parents can do to ensure their child gets the best rest possible:

**A regular schedule** Parents should establish a bedtime routine when children are young. Children don’t have the self-discipline to do this on their own—they will want to stay up and not “miss” anything—so parents have to set the rules about when it’s time to go to sleep.

**Limit activities** Kids are attracted to stimulating activities. Encourage relaxation as bedtime approaches; discourage your child from engaging in anything that causes excitement right before going to sleep—this can mean stressful homework where the brain has to work hard, video games that raise the heart rate, action movies that stimulate the senses etc… Also, monitor your child’s extra-curricular activities to make sure they’re not over-extending themselves by participating in too much.

**Bedroom environment** Your teen’s bedroom should be comfortable and conducive to sleep. It should not be a private activity center. Don’t allow items such as, televisions, computers, video games, MP3 players, or cell phones into the sleep environment. On average, if a teen has four or more appliances in their bedroom, they will get over 30 minutes less sleep per night, as reported by the “Teens and Sleep,” National Sleep Foundation 2006 poll.

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**Sleep is even more important to younger children because…**

- Childhood is prime growing time
- It’s peak time for brain development and learning
- Skills like paying attention, listening, short-term memory recall and following directions are all impacted by the quality of rest
- Sleep nourishes the immune system
- Youngsters are less cranky and whiny when they get good sleep
- Too little sleep can be an instigator of behavior and learning problems

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**Frustrated trying to get your child to follow the rules? Or, are you having more difficult problems with an older child or teen? EASE can help!**

Childcare specialists and/or counseling is available through the EASE program. Call 216/241-3273 or 800/521-3273

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How much sleep does my child need?

every child is different. Some will need more sleep, some a little less.

When you determine your child’s daily sleep totals, include full nights of sleep and daytime naps. Infants up to 6 months benefit from three daytime naps; from 6—18-months, two daytime naps; from 18-months to five-years-old typically need one daily nap.

The chart below will give you a good idea of how much total sleep the typical child needs at various ages. Compare your child’s sleep totals and decide if an adjustment is necessary.

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Parents: Um, dream on. Parents don’t sleep

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from The Child Care Information Exchange Library, “Good Sleep and Bedtime Habits Nourish Kids.”

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Parents: Um, dream on. Parents don’t sleep

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from The Child Care Information Exchange Library, “Good Sleep and Bedtime Habits Nourish Kids.”
It’s a myth that the older you get, the less sleep you require. Seniors actually require as much sleep as their younger counterparts, with 7–9 hours being the optimum range required for adequate rest.

The problem is that about 65 percent of seniors report waking up at night on a regular basis to go to the bathroom (National Sleep Foundation Survey, “Sleep and Aging,” 2003). This results in a lot of waking and lighter sleep, instead of the deeper sleep needed in order to feel refreshed in the morning.

According to the NSF poll, about 53 percent of healthy seniors report trouble sleeping. Seniors with medical problems were more likely to report sleep problems—up to 82 percent of seniors diagnosed with stroke, heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, arthritis or hypertension; 84 percent of those with impaired mobility reported sleep difficulties. It’s illness that causes seniors to sleep less or not as well, not age itself.

Napping during the day can cause problems, too. It’s recommended that seniors not take a nap of more than 15-20 minutes if they want to sleep well at night. Naps can be difficult to avoid if your loved one is not active and tends to nod off in front of the television during the day.

The good news is that sleep problems can be corrected, but that involves discussing the issue with your loved one’s physician. Treatments might include cognitive behavior therapy, relaxation techniques and/or medication. In some cases, the doctor may want to reset the individual’s internal clock by keeping the person awake until they’re exhausted, which will trigger a deeper sleep, at least for a short period of time; the doctor can then work with the patient in adjusting their sleep patterns further.

Seniors and sleep

We all know that it’s important to stay physically active in order to keep the body and muscles strong and functioning as they should, but now research shows that regular physical activity can also lower the risk of dementia.

The study, Exercise is Associated with Reduced Risk for Incident Dementia Among Persons 65 Years of Age and Older, published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, January 17, 2006, followed 1,740 people ages 65 and older who showed no signs of dementia. From 1994 to 2003, the patient’s health was evaluated every two years.

Of the original group, 1,185 were found to remain free of dementia, with 77% in that group reporting that they exercised three or more times a week; 158 people showed signs of dementia, with 67% saying they exercised that much. (The remainder of people, 397, either died or withdrew from the study.) According to the report, this equates to a frequency of dementia of 13 per 1,000 persons for those who said they exercised three or more times per week, compared to 19.7 per 1,000 persons for those who reported less exercise.

While further research is needed in order to draw additional conclusions regarding the types of exercise that might be most beneficial, researchers agree that physical activity does appear to at least delay the onset of various types of dementia. They theorize that exercise may reduce the brain levels of amyloid, a sticky protein that clogs the brain in Alzheimer’s patients.

Exercises for the brain

Seniors can maintain or improve mental clarity if they keep their mind stimulated. Sometimes as people age, they may lose interest in some activities previously enjoyed, but it’s important to continue to participate in activities that challenge the mind.

Any problem-solving activity is a good exercise for the brain. Sudoku, crossword puzzles, word searches, trivia questions, chess, checkers are all games that a person can either play alone or with a partner. You should try to do at least one brain-stimulating exercise every day.

For those who live alone, schedule a regular game day with friends, neighbors or relatives. Companionship is also important and the challenge of playing against another person can further stimulate the thinking process. If your loved one has difficulty participating on their own, offer your assistance when it comes to their turn—even those with impaired abilities will benefit from participating.

Stay active... Keep your mind fit!

If you’re struggling with care decisions or having difficulty communicating with an elderly loved one, EASE@Work can help. Let our eldercare specialists assist you. Call us at 216/241-3273 or 800/521-3273
For centuries, man has known the importance and value of restful sleep. There are numerous quotes to be found about sleep, but perhaps William Shakespeare said it best when he wrote in Macbeth that sleep “is the balm of hurt minds, great nature’s second course and the chief nourisher in life’s feast.”

To put it in more modern terms...“Similar to diet and exercise, sleep needs to be an integral element of a healthy lifestyle,” said Darrel Drobnich, acting chief executive officer of the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), in a 2008 report, Sleep in America. “The impact of not getting good sleep is far reaching and has Americans compromising their productivity, safety, health and relationships—both on the job and at home.”

According to the National Institutes of Health, approximately 70 million people in the United States are affected by chronic sleep disorders and intermittent sleep problems. If you have difficulty with your sleep, try these tips from the NSF for a better night’s rest.

- Have a standard bedtime routine and keep regular sleep times.
- Take a warm bath. Try aromatherapy using lavender.
- Make sure your bedroom is dark, cool and quiet and that your sleep surface, pillows and coverings provide you with comfort.
- Wear a sleeping mask and/or ear plugs.
- Use a white noise machine or fan to block out noise. Unplug the telephone.
- Exercise regularly, but finish your workout at least three hours before bedtime.
- Have only a light snack before bedtime. Don’t go to bed too full or too hungry.
- Avoid foods and drinks high in caffeine for at least eight hours prior to bedtime. Avoid alcohol a few hours before bedtime. Avoid nicotine. Caffeine, nicotine and alcohol can disturb sleep.
- Use your bedroom only for sleep and sex; if you do this, you will strengthen the association between bed and sleep. Remove any work materials, computers and televisions from your sleep environment.
- If you have trouble sleeping when you go to bed, don’t nap during the day, since this can affect your ability to sleep at night.
- Clear your mind—don’t try to solve your daily problems while in bed when you should be relaxed and resting.
- If you can’t get to sleep after 30 minutes, don’t stay in bed tossing and turning. Get up and involve yourself in some relaxing activity, such as listening to soothing music or reading, until you feel sleepy.
- If you experience trouble sleeping on a regular basis, are extremely tired during the day, or suspect you might have sleep apnea, talk with your healthcare professional.

Many studies have been done regarding the health benefits of lavender, but some of the most useful information in terms of the impact of lavender on sleep comes from research studies done at Britain’s University of Southampton (BUS) and psychologists at Wesleyan University (WU). Both studies demonstrated the power of lavender in relieving anxiety and promoting more restful sleep.

Subjects in the BUS study slept in rooms where lavender oil was diffused throughout the night; another group (the placebo group) slept in a room where almond oil was diffused. After one week, the groups switched rooms. In each case, those sleeping in the room with lavender ranked the quality of their sleep 20% better.

In the WU experiments, test groups were asked to sniff lavender for four 2-minute periods before going to bed for one night; on another night, they were asked to sniff distilled water. The researchers then monitored the test groups sleep cycles using brain scans.

On the nights where the individuals sniffed lavender, the subjects slept more soundly and reported feeling more energetic the next morning.

The brain scans also showed that lavender increased slow-wave sleep—the deep sleep that slows the heartbeat and causes muscles to relax. It is also thought that the brain organizes memory during this phase of sleep.

Try it yourself! All you need is pure lavender essential oil, which is available at most health food stores for about $8. Sprinkle a few drops on a piece of tissue and tuck it under your pillow. Or, you can use an aromatherapy diffuser.
Need energy? Eat this!

We’ve heard about “super foods” for their top-of-the-line health benefits, often highlighting their energizing capabilities. Numerous studies have been conducted, as well as research about past civilizations and present-day tribes to identify these nutritional gems. So one may ask, “What foods are my best choices for power and potency?”

Explore foods from this list, and you will find there are a variety of power-packed foods you may find unique and delicious.

**Dates**—Want energy? A serving of dates is a high potassium and high fiber source, packed with 33 grams of healthy carbohydrates. This fruit has staying power—it dates back to early Egypt, 4500 BC.

**Figs**—Brought to the United States by Spanish Missionaries in the mid 1700s, this high-fiber fruit contains over 7 grams of fiber (20% DV) and 44 carbohydrates per serving.

**Kiwi fruit**—A tasty serving of 2 medium kiwifruit have as much potassium as a banana, and 4 grams of filling fiber. More than 700 varieties are grown in China.

**Acai berries**—Berries found in the South American rainforest, the anthocyanins in acai are up to 30 times greater than the levels found in red wine. Amazon tribes have been found to use the berry for optimizing their immune system.

**Lycium fruit**—Often referred to as the Goji, this berry is dried from the Asian Lycium fruit. A serving contains more beta carotene (over 100% DV) than a carrot.

**Yogurt**—Containing a good balance of protein and carbohydrates, this fermented milk with live, active cultures is a high calcium energy source.

**Broccoli**—Around for more than 2000 years (first grown in Calabria, Italy), this deep green veggie is common among gardens in the Northern United States. It has as much calcium per ounce as milk, as well as important phytochemicals that boost enzymes to fight carcinogens.

**Jerusalem artichoke**—This artichoke is high in iron, potassium, magnesium and vitamin C. It contains the fiber insulin, which keeps you full longer and helps the body absorb the iron from the vegetable. A serving contains more than 8 grams of fiber.

**Flaxseed**—Add ground flaxseed (for better absorption) to soups or cereals for a healthy dose of Omega-3 fatty acids.

**Black walnuts**—The official state nut of Missouri, another great source of Omega-3’s is this version of the walnut.

**Clams and shellfish**—These options from the sea are high in iron, important for fighting fatigue.

**Liver**—This organ meat, high in vitamin B-12, helps prevent anemia related weakness.

**Lentils**—Part of the legume family, and one of the most ancient cultivated foods grown in many parts of the world, protein-rich lentils contain 90% DV of folic acid.

**Quinoa**—Quinoa is a great meatless alternative to get your protein. This not so well known staple of the Incas contains almost 50% DV of Manganese and is high in magnesium and iron. It’s easy to cook too! Just cook it as you would cook rice. PS. Quinoa comes closer than any other food in supplying all nutrients necessary to the body.

How do you know if eating these and other healthy foods will improve how you feel? Try for yourself. Mix up your diet. Eliminate low-nutrient foods and toss in a few super foods from the list instead. You may find your diet more fulfilling, more energizing and more fun!


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Sweet Potato Pie

Try this recipe as a change from the traditional pumpkin pie this holiday season. Sweet potatoes are easy to use and are high in vitamins A, C and E. This recipe switches out some higher calorie options, such as butter and molasses, in exchange for healthier ingredient options.

**Pie Shell**

1 ¼ cups flour (try spelt flour instead of regular white flour)
½ tsp. Sugar
1/3 cup Skim milk
2 tbs. vegetable oil

**Filling**

1/4 cup white sugar
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/2 tsp. nutmeg
3 large eggs (beaten)
1/4 cup canned evaporated skim milk
1 tsp vanilla
3 cups sweet potatoes (cooked and mashed)

Combine ingredients above, creating a soft ball of dough. Let chill, then press and roll out between two pieces of waxed paper to fit a 9-inch pie pan.

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Perk Up With a Workout at Work!

A recent study by the University of Bristol in England reported the following perks to fitting in a workout at work:

- 72% of employees who worked out improved their time management
- 74% of employees who worked out better managed their time
- 79% of employees who worked out were sharper and more focused

—Source: Fitness Magazine, June 2009

So forgo the lunchtime fast-food run, and instead take a walk or jog. If you only have 15 minutes, climb stairs or walk around your building. You can even find a quiet spot to jump rope, stretch or practice yoga.

You may find that a quick workout will perk you up better than your usual cup of coffee!

—Contributed by Stephanie Patek, EASE@Work Account Representative and certified fitness coach.