

SLEEP 101



WHEN WE SLEEP WELL

OUR DRIVE TO SLEEP: From the moment we wake for the day, our sleep drive grows stronger - like hunger grows the longer it's been since we have eaten. Exercise makes our sleep drive grow faster while naps and caffeine make it lessen.

OUR CLOCK FOR ALERTNESS: We have an internal biological "clock" that helps regulate our alertness. This clock works on a circadian rhythm – this means it runs on approximately a 24 hour cycle. To help us maintain a fairly consistent level of alertness while awake, our circadian clock sends us an alerting signal that helps counter our sleep drive that grows during the day – this signal rapidly dissipates at bedtime to support us staying asleep. When our alerting signal begins rising for the day and when it dissipates at night is influenced by a number of factors, including biologically-based preferences that can vary throughout our lifespan.

CALM AT BEDTIME: Engaging in enjoyable but not overly stimulating activities before bedtime can help wind down our mind for sleep. We fall asleep within 10-30 minutes on average of lying down to sleep.

AMOUNT OF SLEEP: While the majority of people would find 7-8 hours of sleep on average to be satisfactory, it is important to realize that an individual's optimal amount of sleep could be more or less than this and can also vary over time. Trying to force yourself to sleep more than you need can easily lead to insomnia.

FACTORS THAT CAN AFFECT SLEEP

- Medical conditions (e.g., chronic pain, heart disease)
- Sleep disorders (e.g., insomnia, sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome)
- Activities while awake conflict with preferred sleep schedule
- Psychiatric issues (e.g., anxiety, depression)
- Stress at home, work, school, etc.
- Sleep environment (e.g., noise, pets)
- Medications and substances (e.g., caffeine, alcohol, illicit drugs)

TREATING SLEEP ISSUES

There are highly effective treatments available for sleep issues – they can involve one or more of the following professionals:

- Sleep physician – to help find provider, check *American Academy of Sleep Medicine* website www.sleepeducation.org/find-a-facility
- Behavioral sleep medicine provider – to help find provider, check *Society of Behavioral Sleep Medicine* website, www.behavioralsleep.org
- Primary care and/or specialty provider
- Mental health provider

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