

Sleeping Soundly

DID YOU KNOW?

- At least 2/3 of college students report occasional sleep disturbances.
- 1/3 of those who reported sleep disturbances reported severe sleep difficulties.
- One study showed that only 11% of the students surveyed met the criteria for good sleep quality.
- 35% of adults reported experiencing at least one symptom of insomnia each night.

Sleep is essential for good health, mental and emotional functioning, and personal safety. College students should get 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night. Insufficient sleep can lead to one or more of the following problems:

- **Anxiety:** People who get less than a full night's sleep feel more stressed, angry, sad and mentally exhausted. This pattern can lead to increased anxiety.
- **Cognitive difficulties:** Insufficient sleep can cause deficits in attention, concentration, and critical thinking.
- **Depression:** Sleep difficulties such as insomnia or excessiveness sleepiness, may be signs of depression.
- **Reduced physical health:** Inadequate sleep can lead to a weakened immune system, and put you at risk for health related problems.

WHY AM I SO SLEEPY?

- **Not allowing enough time to sleep** – On average, college students sleep 6 hours per night. Even if your schedule is hectic, set aside enough time for adequate sleep.
- **Stress** - Balancing schoolwork, activities and a job can be overwhelming. Excessive worrying can contribute to stress and can keep you up at night. Practice relaxation techniques and learn about stress management skills to maintain normal stress levels.
- **Poor Sleep Hygiene** - College students often get less sleep during the week and attempt to make up for it during the weekends. It is important to remember that inconsistent sleep habits can lead to chronic sleep difficulties. Waking up at the same time each day is essential in sleep hygiene.
- **Medication** - If you are taking any medication, find out what the side effects are. If one of the side effects is preventing you from sleeping, consult with your healthcare provider about the best time of day to take medication or if it is necessary to change your prescription.
- **Lack of Exercise** - A person who does not get enough physical activity may experience low energy and will be less productive. Exercising early in the day can promote sleep at night. Do not worry if you cannot do anything too strenuous. A simple 30-minute walk or other form of light exercise will do the trick.



Tips for sound sleep

- Develop a routine! Spend time doing the same thing before bed each night. This will prepare you for sleep. Give yourself about 30 minutes to get ready. Avoid working right up until you go to bed.
- Be consistent! Train your body to sleep at night by going to bed at the same time every day including weekends. It might be rough at first but it will be worth it after 2-3 weeks.
- Avoid worrying in bed. Try journaling to help store your thoughts.
- Make sure that your bedroom is as quiet and dark as possible. Use earplugs, a fan, or white noise (simplynoise.com) to mask noises that may interfere with your sleep.
- Avoid or limit your use of caffeine and alcohol, especially in the evening.
- Nothing too stimulating before bed. Exercise is great for regulating sleep but don't exercise within two hours of falling asleep. No TV, computer, or electronic use 30 minutes before bed.
- Practice relaxation skills that assist you in managing stress and decreasing physical symptoms of anxiety (e.g. yoga, diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, etc.)
- Be satisfied. Avoid eating a huge, heavy meal before bed but make sure not to go to bed hungry.
- Prepare for the next morning by having your clothes picked out and your books together for the next day. This will save a lot of time and you will not be rushed in the morning.
- Try and keep the temperature in the bedroom around 70°F.
- Keep your cell phone turned off while you sleep. Use a clock instead.
- Don't drink a lot of fluids within 2 hours of bedtime.
- Take a hot bath or shower before bedtime.
- Exercise regularly and during the day (late afternoon, before dinner is good).
- Reduce non-sleep activities in bed (eating, studying, using the computer) to strengthen the association between your bed and sleeping.
- Avoid naps during the day. If you choose to take one, prevent yourself from sleeping longer than 20 minutes. Avoid taking them late in the afternoon.

If you can't fall asleep:

- Don't try and force it. Don't lay there and worry and stress out about it. You don't want to associate trying to sleep with stress and anxiety. If you can't fall asleep after 20-30 minutes, get out of bed and engage in a relaxing activity for about 30 minutes (e.g. listen to soothing music, drink of cup of decaffeinated tea, enjoyable reading, or a relaxation exercise). No TV!
- If you cannot sleep, don't worry. Accept that it isn't going to go the way you would like it to and plan to wake up at the normal time and have a normal day. You'll probably be tired, but that will help you get better sleep the next night.
- Try and reduce worrying and stressing out in bed. If worries and anxiety are preventing you from sleeping, get up and write down what you're thinking in a journal.

