

... OCTOBER 2010 ...

QUICK TAKES

GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP

With today's busy schedules it's often hard to find the time to get enough sleep. All too often we end up trading sleep for more work or leisure time. Whatever your reasons are for not getting enough sleep, it's important to look at your sleep habits to see if there's some way to squeeze in a few more ZZZs.

- **Lifestyle choices** have a big impact. For instance, drinking caffeinated beverages or alcohol before bedtime is a common cause of insomnia.
- **Medications** often have side effects that disrupt sleep patterns.
- **Underlying physical conditions** such as asthma or arthritis can make it difficult to fall or stay asleep. The onset of menopause may trigger insomnia.
- **Mental health problems** including depression and anxiety disorders can lead to insomnia.
- **Sleep disorders** such as sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome and narcolepsy often go untreated.



How to Get a Good Night's Sleep

Wake up, sleep-deprived Americans! Lack of sleep can make you sick.

"People who sleep less than six hours a night visit the doctor much more frequently than people who sleep well," said Harry Kerasidis, M.D., director of the Calvert Memorial Hospital Sleep Disorders Center in Prince Frederick, Md.

The research backs it up. A January 2009 study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* shows that people who sleep at least eight hours a night are far less likely to catch a cold than those who sleep less than seven hours a night.



More serious health problems can result, too. According to a study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* in 2005, lack of sleep can cause hormone changes that might lead to obesity.

Some sleep disorders can increase the risk for serious disease. For instance, obstructive sleep apnea, a common disorder in which the upper airway is intermittently narrowed or blocked, more than doubles the risk of stroke in men.

Rules to Snooze By

What if you've resolved to give yourself much-needed sack-time, only to spend the night tossing and turning? Follow these guidelines. They'll not only help you fall asleep fast, they'll promote quality sleep -- deep, restful slumber that leaves you feeling alert and refreshed for the next day.

Don't nap after 3 p.m.

Avoid caffeinated drinks. Caffeine makes it tough to doze off -- even 12 hours later for some people. Cut out coffee, tea and energy drinks after the late afternoon.

A nightcap isn't the answer. Alcohol may make you sleepy initially, but it also makes you wake up more often during the night. Nicotine plays havoc with sleep, too.

Keep a schedule. We all love that Saturday morning sleep-in, but if you're struggling with insomnia during the week, it's critical to maintain a routine for going to bed and rising -- even on the weekend.

Make time for exercise. People who exercise regularly -- even if it's just a brisk stroll at lunch -- tend to sleep better at night. But evening exercise can make it harder to fall asleep; schedule your workout for morning or afternoon.

Rethink your bedroom. Replace lumpy pillows or a sagging mattress. Use light-blocking shades or an eye mask to keep the room dark, and earplugs or a white-noise generator if noise disturbs you. Adjust the thermostat -- a slightly cool bedroom is more conducive to sleep.

Rules to Snooze By (cont.)

Slide into the tub. A hot bath is more than relaxing – studies suggest it causes body temperature to drop a little afterwards, which may be a cue that triggers the body's instinct to sleep.

Beds are for sleeping. Don't use your bed for late-night TV watching, Internet browsing or eating. Hit the pillow only with sleep on your mind.

Talk to your doctor. If sleepiness is interfering with daily life, or if you're nodding off during the day (even if it's at a very boring meeting), talk with your doctor. You may be suffering from a medical condition such as sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome. Most sleep disorders can be treated effectively.

Pillow Talk

A good pillow supports your head, relieving pressure on your neck and back. A pillow creates a feeling of comfort, which helps you relax and get a good night's sleep. In order to get the right support, check your sleep position below to see how to best use your pillow.

Back: If you sleep on your back, the height of your pillow should be lower than if you were sleeping on your side. This should support the natural curve of your neck,



as well as your head and shoulders. The pillow shouldn't be so big that it pushes your neck forward and down.

Side: When sleeping on your side, you want your spine to maintain a straight, natural horizontal line. Place your pillow so that it supports your head and neck while keeping your spine in line. Try not to sleep in a curled-up position, which can tighten you up.

Stomach: If you are most comfortable on your stomach, try to use a pillow that is fairly flat, or rest your head directly on the mattress. This way the head and neck aren't turned unnaturally to either side.

Source: Inverness Medical

Overnight Oatmeal Makes 4 servings

You'll sleep well knowing that when you wake up there will be a bowlful of delicious porridge ready and waiting for you.

This recipe uses steel-cut oats (also called Scotch oats or Irish oatmeal), which retain much of the nutrient content of this most healthful grain. Traditional steel-cut oats work well with the long, low heat of the slow cooker. Do not substitute old-fashioned rolled oats or quick-and-easy steel cut oats in this recipe.

Preparation

1. Just before going to bed, combine oats, water, half-and-half, apple, dried fruit and salt in a slow cooker. Turn heat to low. Put on the lid and let cook through the night, eight to nine hours.
2. If you don't have a slow cooker, cook the oatmeal covered in a double boiler on top of the stove. (A double boiler is two pots that are formed to fit together so that one fits partway inside the other. The lower pot holds simmering water, which gently heats the contents of the pot above it.) Remember to stir from time to time and check the water level in the bottom pot. The porridge will take about one hour using this method.
3. Spoon into bowls and sprinkle with a little brown sugar, if desired.



Nutritional info / serving

Per serving
231 calories
3 g fat
0 g saturated fat
8 g protein
8 g fiber
289 mg sodium