

HEALTH Education

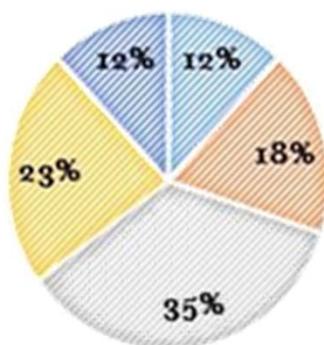
Sleep Awareness: Sleep Better, Feel Better

We are always on the lookout for ways to transform our lives. However, sometimes we forget that along with exercise there is another miracle drug within our control: sleep. According to the National Sleep Foundation, 35 percent of Americans have reported their sleep quality as “poor” or “only fair.”. Additionally, the Sleep Health Index indicates that more than half of the U.S. population has taken a nap within the past seven days. This high frequency of reported napping suggests that a large number of Americans need more quality sleep.

Health is highly associated with sleep quality. In the nation-wide Sleep Health Index Study, those who reported poor quality of sleep also reported poor quality of health. Getting valuable sleep can promote peak performance and productivity. It also can help you fight off infection, maintain a healthy weight and avoid chronic diseases. Without healthy sleep, heart disease and Type 2 Diabetes are more prominent.

Sleep Quality

■ Excellent ■ Very good ■ Good ■ Only fair ■ Poor



Improving sleep duration is an easy fix, but how do we improve our sleep quality? Many Americans with sleep deprivation have forgotten the feeling of being 100 percent rested.

Below are four tips to help prepare for a quality night's rest:

- 1. Create a sleep schedule, even on the weekends.** Pick a bed time and a wake up time. Try to stick with these times as much as possible by making gradual adjustments about 15-minute increments every couple days so the body's internal clock can become accustomed to the new bedtime and wake up time.
- 2. Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual.** Try taking a warm bath or shower, brushing your teeth, dimming the night lights, and crawling straight into bed. It is recommended to avoid eating 2 to 3 hours before bedtime as well as nicotine, caffeine and alcohol in the evenings as these products are stimulants and take hours to wear off.
- 3. Exercise daily.** Physical activity improves sleep quality and increases sleep duration by reducing stress on the body. There are even bonus points for exercising outdoors. Exposure to natural sunlight during the day helps establish your body's internal clock to match the sun.
- 4. Turn off electronics before bed.** The blue light emitted by screens on cell phones, tablets, televisions, etc. withholds the production of our hormone that controls our sleep/wake cycles (melatonin). It is recommended to turn off all electronics 30 minutes before bed.



Why go through the hassle of creating a better sleep atmosphere? Well, having a sleep schedule that provides quality of sleep has lasting effects on your quality of life. Below are a few more reasons why your sleep is an important part of your well-being.

- **Increased Happiness.** Those who have a successful sleep are more likely to be in a better moods. The lack of sleep has even been linked to higher rates of depression.
- **Build Muscle Easier.** The body uses most of the night to heal damaged muscles from the day. On the other hand, lack of sleep is linked to muscle atrophy.
- **Learn Faster.** Short-term memory, focus, and fact retention are directly correlated with quality of sleep.
- **Drive Better.** Sleep-deprived drivers are like drunk drivers. According to the National Sleep Foundation, drowsy driving is responsible for 100,000 crashes and 1,500 deaths every year.
- **Best way to stay fit.** In addition to its ability to build muscle, getting enough sleep increases your energy throughout the day, while also keeping any craving to a minimum.

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From Corporate Fitness Works Team Leader, Natalie Gish