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BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Wellness Monthly

Healthy matters to keep in mind.

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Sleepless Nights – How They Affect Your Mood and Health

The occasional night of tossing and turning is a nuisance, plain and simple. The morning after a sleepless night generally brings with it a foggy mind and a lethargic body. Whether this inability to get ample sleep is the result of a lifestyle decision or a sleep disorder, it is likely to negatively impact your mood and your health.

Sleep and Your Mood

Researchers have found a link between sleep deprivation, anger, anxiety and depression. During a study conducted at the University of Pennsylvania¹, researchers allowed participants to sleep only four and a half hours per night for one week. After seven days, the study showed that people felt significantly more angry,

stressed and sad. This finding has been reinforced by many other studies showing that mood suffers from lack of sleep.

Sleep and Your Health

Because of the hormones generated during sleep, chronic sleeplessness can have a negative effect on one's health. Several landmark studies

have found a connection between inadequate rest and medical conditions such as obesity and diabetes.² For example, a hormone called leptin has a direct influence on appetite and weight because it tells the body when it should feel full. Doctors have noted a link between lack of sleep and low levels of leptin.

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How Much Sleep Is Enough?

- Sleep experts recommend seven to nine hours of daily rest for adults of every age.
- Women in the first trimester of pregnancy may need several hours more than normal.
- Infants need up to 16 hours of sleep each day.
- If you feel drowsy during the day or routinely fall asleep within five minutes of lying down, you probably are not getting enough rest. So-called "microsleeps" (very brief episodes of sleep in an otherwise awake person) are another sign of sleep deprivation.

Upcoming Articles

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Living Within Your Means

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Stress-Free Family Vacations



A 1999 study by the University of Chicago showed that a sleep deficit of even three or four hours over a week affects the body's ability to process carbohydrates and insulin, potentially resulting in a pre-diabetic state.³ Other studies have shown that the production of growth hormone, which controls the adult body's proportions of fat to muscle, can also be adversely affected

by a lack of sleep.⁴ As a result, people who are chronically sleep deprived are at increased risk of becoming overweight.

Sleep and Physical Performance

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, driver fatigue is responsible for over 100,000 car accidents each year. Studies have also shown that sleep deprivation

has an effect on hand-eye coordination that can be as severe as that of intoxication.⁵ Daytime alertness and memory can be impaired by even eight hours of lost sleep over several nights.

Sleep is the foundation of a healthy mind and body. When you get a good night's rest, you prepare yourself for the day ahead, and you're much more likely to handle life's challenges with

clear eyes and a fresh mind. Make it a priority to get a good night's rest and the benefits can be great.

For some people, sleep is hard to come by. Stress, anxiety and depression can make it difficult to relax. If this is the case for you, don't hesitate to get support. UBH is here to help. Call or log on anytime for help with any of life's challenges.

Tips for Getting a Good Night's Rest

Keep a set schedule — Going to bed and rising each day at about the same time helps set your internal clock. Sleeping late on weekends actually makes it harder to get up Monday mornings because you have reset your internal clock.

Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol — Caffeine is a stimulant and will probably keep you awake if consumed too close to bedtime. Smokers sleep lightly and wake up early because of nicotine withdrawal. And although alcohol is a depressant and may help you nod off more quickly, it robs you of deep sleep and keeps you in the lighter stages of slumber.

Relax before bedtime — Many people find that taking a warm bath, reading a book or drinking tea or milk is a good transition to bedtime. Avoid activities that keep your mind too active.

Get comfortable — Be sure to set your thermostat at a temperature comfortable for you. Your pillow and mattress should be firm enough to provide the support you need.

Consult a doctor if you have chronic sleeplessness — One or two restless nights will not do long-term harm to your system, but if you are



constantly tired, you may have a sleep disorder. Be sure to see your doctor if chronic sleeplessness is a problem for you.

Resources

United Behavioral Health

Ask your HR representative for your access code and toll-free number.

www.liveandworkwell.com

Use the search phrase "needing sleep" for more about the importance of sleep and ideas for overcoming insomnia.

¹Basner M, Fomberstein KM, Razavi FM, et al. American time use survey: sleep time and its relationship to waking activities. *Sleep*. 2007;30(9):1085-95.

²Flier JS, Elmquist JK. A good night's sleep: Future antidote to the obesity epidemic? *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 2004;141(11):885-86.

³Spiegel K, Leproult R, Van Cauter E. Impact of sleep debt on metabolic and endocrine function. *The Lancet*. 1999 Oct 23;354:1435-39.

⁴Leproult R, Copinschi G, Buxton O, Van Cauter E. Sleep loss results in an elevation of cortisol levels the next evening. *Sleep*. 1997;20(10):865-70.

⁵Williamson AM, Feyer AM. Moderate sleep deprivation produces impairments in cognitive and motor performance equivalent to legally prescribed levels of alcohol intoxication. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. 2000;57(10):649-55.