

# A report on sleep deprivation psychology essay



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Sleep Deprivation is one of the most common problems held in the United States. Lack of sleep is an increasing problem that is not cautioned enough in today's society. An excessively sleepy person deals with the short and long term effects, and also may be at risk for multiple disorders following such deprivation. This paper will present the effects and possible links to certain diseases related to sleep deprivation, and how to prevent sleep deprivation from occurring.

### **Causes**

The average person needs 7 (+- 2) hours of sleep a night to function regularly (*"A Good Nights Sleep" 2009*). To many Americans, this number is only a suggestion. Many people believe that they can function normal with much less sleep than recommended, and therefore do not acquire the necessary amount. When a person puts off the sleep that is needed, a "sleep debt" is created. Sleep debt occurs when lost sleep builds up over time and a person requires more sleep to feel rested (*Dement 1997*). The most common people suffering from sleep deprivation are college students and elderly men and women. College students tend to lose sleep because voluntary actions. Attending parties, and finishing procrastinated projects tend to be the main causes (*Purdy 2009*). In elderly people, the main causes of sleep deprivation are the fact that many take naps during the day, making it more difficult for them to fall asleep at night (*Dama 2005*), and diseases more common in the elderly, like Alzheimer's tend to cause lower amounts of sleep to be obtained (*Purdy 2009*).

## Effects

Sleep Deprivation is one of the most common problems in the American society. It is a problem that causes, in many different ways, harm to our bodies and personalities. Sleep deprivation has showed a decrease in performance in school and at work for students and adults. It tends to "increase the use of marijuana, caffeine, and cigarettes." (*Dama 2005*) . Too little sleep results in causing a person to become forgetful, or become easily confused (*Grayling 2009*) . "'Sleep length has been shown to be related to life satisfaction and sleep quality to several measures of health and well being (*Craig 2009*) .'" Our own loss of sleep does not only affect ourselves, but the lives of people around us. Tiredness causes a person to be moody and irritable, which is never a fun personality to be around (" *A Good Nights Sleep*" 2009) . " Every year, 200, 000 motor vehicle accidents occur because of sleep deprivation" (*Dama 2009*) . This number is insanely high, given the fact that sleep deprivation is a very preventable thing. A person may also be more vulnerable to making mistakes when overly tired, which is in some cases very fatal to patients in a hospital (*Dama 2009*) .

## Links to Disorders and Risks

Aside from the common, every-day effects of sleep deprivation, there are also a number of more serious effects. As described earlier, mental effects are often caused by lack of sleep. However, the brain is not the only thing affected. Sleep deprivation has been found to cause damages to the immune system. " Proinflammatory cytokines" increase with the number of hours of sleep a person has lost. This can cause "'cardiovascular inflammation and risk (*Tuma 2006*) .'" It has also been found that a poor amount of sleep can cause increase in body mass. People who sleep less crave more food (*Tuma* <https://assignbuster.com/a-report-on-sleep-deprivation-psychology-essay/>

2006) . It has been discovered that there is a link between sleep deprivation and type 2 diabetes (*Grayling 2009*) . The fact that a lack of sleep causes tiredness, moodiness and irritability also relates to the fact that sleep deprivation is linked to depression. Depression rates have spiked since the increase of participants in the medical field (*Dama 2005*) .

### **Prevention**

Sleep Deprivation causes many minor, but possibly severe effects. However, sleep deprivation is not a disease. It can easily be prevented by taking time to use methods to improve a person's sleeping environment, falling asleep, and the quality of a person's sleep.

The environment a person sleeps in is very important to your sleeping habits. Keep your bedroom at a comfortable room temperature. Take time to experiment which temperatures are cozy at night (*Saison, Segal and Barston 2008*) . The comfier a person is, the more vulnerable they are to falling asleep. Make sure the mattress is as firm or soft as preferred, and there are enough blankets ("*A Good Nights Sleep*" 2009) . Keep the noise level to a minimum. The quieter a bedroom is, the better. If it is not possible to eliminate some noises, such as the hustle and bustle of the city area, try to block these noises out. Using a fan or a soothing CD are a couple of methods that have been used to increase vulnerability to sleep (*Saison, Segal and Barston 2008*) . A bedroom should have one purpose, and one purpose only: Sleeping. If a bedroom is used as an office or a living room, the unnecessary distractions will make it hard for a person to relax. Visions of doing office work or watching a person's favorite television show may fill the mind, making it nearly impossible to sleep ("*A Good Nights Sleep*" 2009) .

Regular exercise and good eating habits have been found to increase the hours or desired sleep. As little as 20 minutes can have a positive effect. However, exercising within 3 hours of a person's desired bedtime has been found to make sleeping more difficult (*"A Good Nights Sleep" 2009*). This is because exercise "stimulates the body, raising its temperature" and "a cooler body temperature is related with sleep (*Saison, Segal and Barston 2008*)". When and how much you eat is also related to the quality of your sleep. Making dinner time at least 2 hours before you go to bed, and choosing the right foods to eat can add to good quality sleep. Calcium is an ideal nutrient to have before sleep. However, a person should avoid eating too much protein before bed. Protein stimulates brain activity, making it harder to fall asleep. Fatty and rich foods also have negative effects on sleep (*Saison, Segal and Barston 2008*).

In order to improve sleep, a person must have basic knowledge about common sleep disturbances and how they can be treated. One of the main causes for over-tiredness in the U. S. is untreated sleep disturbances. A couple of these disturbances include Insomnia, Nightmares, and sleep apnea. "Insomnia includes difficulty in getting to sleep or staying asleep, and also not feeling rested after sleeping (*Denis Coon and John O. Mitterer 2007 p. 232*)". Actions that can be taken to calm this disturbance are stimulus control (getting up and going to sleep at the same time), sleep restriction (restricting oneself to a normal amount of sleep), paradoxical intention (removing pressures of trying to fall asleep), relaxation techniques, exercise, and avoiding stimulants (*Denis Coon and John O. Mitterer 2007 pp. 232-233*). Nightmares are "bad dreams that take place during REM sleep."

There are a few simple steps that can be taken in order to eliminate nightmares. First, write down and describe everything you remember about the nightmare in detail. Once written down, change the parts of your dream you wish to change, and be sure to re-write the new dream in detail. Finally, imagery rehearsal is used. Imagery rehearsal is when a person "mentally rehearses the changed dream before you fall asleep again (*Denis Coon and John O. Mitterer 2007 p. 233*) . " In sleep apnea, "breathing stops for periods of 20 seconds to 2 minutes, causing a person to wake up to gulp in air." This disturbance can occur for one of two reasons. The first is that the brain may stop sending the signals that maintain breathing. The other cause is blockage of the upper air passages. Treatments to this disturbance include "weight loss, surgery for breathing obstructions, and use of a CPAP mask to aid breathing during sleep (*Denis Coon and John O. Mitterer 2007 Pg 234*) . " To treat any of these disturbances, the first step is to talk to a doctor and be treated for them. One of the main causes of sleep deprivation is untreated sleep disturbances.

## **Conclusion**

Sleep Deprivation is a major issue. It not only has mental and physical effects on ourselves, but in many ways it can negatively effect the lives of other people. Being aware of a healthy amount of sleep and ways to control a person's sleeping habits are necessary for living a long and healthy life.