

# Sleep: how important is it?



Sleep: How important is it? There are many topics that are related to health and wellness making it hard to complete an observation on a single one. After much thought, the topic that interested me most was sleep. As humans, sleep is essential to our well-being. It is required in order for us to function. A human will die after 11 days of no sleep. The importance of sleep can never be stressed enough. With our hectic life styles, one does not really pay attention to how much sleep they get. Most people are running on less than 7 hours of sleep every day. This is unhealthy and affects our health and wellness. However, people do not think of it in this aspect because they function just fine every day; all they need is some coffee or energy drink. What they do not realize is that the coffee and energy drinks are what are keeping their body function because of the sugar and caffeine entering the blood stream. Without these added substances, the body would crash much earlier in the day. As young adults, our body is able to withstand much of the damage we do to it because it is able to renew its cells much faster than those of older people. The majority of young adults tend to “ catch up” on their sleep over the weekend. Little do they know that this does not help the body as much as maintaining a regular sleeping schedule does. As we get older, our body requires more rest and relaxation in order for us to maintain a healthy body. Seeing that I could not really observe a program associated with sleep, the decision was made to watch an online health video called “ Sleeping well as we age” by Rachel Manber, a PhD professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford Medical School. The video starts out with an explanation of sleep. There are two types of sleep: REM and NonREM. REM sleep is the time when dreams occur. NonREM sleep has three stages. In each stage, the depth of sleep differs. The depth is tested by how

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much noise is required to wake a person up and how they answer the question of whether or not they were sleeping. In stage one, 50% of people answered that they were sleeping, and in stage two 85-95% answered saying that they were sleeping. During stage three, the deepest sleep occurs. Since sleep occurs in cycles, the 7-8 hours of sleep a day should not only be a recommendation, but a requirement. During the first 90 minutes +/- 30 minutes, the first cycle occurs. This cycle goes past REM sleep all the way to stage three. After approximately two hours, a person goes through a REM dream cycle. Throughout the night, people alternate between REM and NonREM until they are awake. As the night goes on, REM sleep becomes longer. During the second half of the night, REM sleep is the longest. However, with that being said, it is during the first half to third of the night that people experience the deepest sleep because stage three is experienced the longest. As age increases, the NonREM sleep decreases dramatically. This would cause people to think that they cannot sleep well because of the decrease in NonREM sleep. That is partially true, but a person can still have a quality sleep. The quality of sleep is determined by fragmentation not length. An individual can sleep for 12 hours with multiple instances in which they wake up and not have a quality sleep; while a person who sleeps for 7-8 hours with few instances of waking up and have a much better quality of sleep. As age increases, stage one and two tend to stay the same. These are the lighter stages of sleep. This causes one to wonder: If NonREM sleep decreases, what increases? The answer to that is wakefulness. As age increases, the length of wakefulness increases as well. Even though the length of wakefulness increases, the complaints regarding poor sleep differ between genders. Females tend to report poor sleep a lot

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more than men as they age. There is an increase in poor sleep in both genders as they age, however women have a higher percentage of this occurring. Men have more apnea than women but the margin diminishes as they get older because of factors such as menopause in women. With that being said, the question remains about why older people sleep less. The answer to that is because there is an impairment in the consolidation of sleep. It is still unclear if this is an age related reduction or simply related to the changes that occur with age. Poor sleep can occur when a person is under stress, due to a mental (depression or anxiety) or medical (pain) disorder or due to substance (medication, cigarettes, etc.) use. Stress is a big factor in the lives of people today. From jobs, school, families and friends; stress accumulates. Most people do not know how to cope with it and therefore stay awake at night as a cause of it. While watching this video, I was very surprised. I had some background knowledge going into this, but I did not think that sleep was so complicated. Growing up I noticed that I slept less as I got older. I would wake up much easier than I used to. When I was younger, I would not be aware of anything that happened around me no matter what the noise level was. This probably explains why there are so many funny pictures of me sleeping that I could never remember. Aside from being surprised at the wealth of information offered in the video, I was very intrigued. I think the most interesting part was the three stages of NonREM sleep. The idea of three stages, each differing in the depth of sleep, is very interesting. I had always assumed that there was deep sleep and the “dream” part ; never imagining that there are different depths of sleep. Even with a psychology background, it was enlightening. The difference in sleep apnea between men and women as they age was interesting as well. In my

mind, I always thought that men slept worse than women. To hear of studies in which women complained more about poor sleep contradicted my beliefs. Sleep is an essential part of our day that has many effects on our life. Social desirability is a major one. The majority of people become irritated by the slightest things when they are lacking sleep. This causes others to avoid them because nobody wants an altercation or argument to arise as a result of their irritability. Society has certain standards which we have to adhere by. These standards include our behavior. When a person yawns in the middle of a meeting or social event, people tend to think that this person is bored and disrespectful. They do not think of other possibilities of why this person is yawning. The lack of sleep is not associated with their actions as much as it should be. With this fast paced life, those who obtain 7-8 hours of sleep a night are rare causing irritability, yawning, and anger to be a big issue. Aside from the social expectations associated with our actions that are influenced by sleep, wellness and health are another major part; probably the most important. The lack of sleep has major adverse effects on the body. Lack of sleep impacts thinking, judgment, and learning. This can lead to accidents, lower grades and inability to learn. The lack of sleep can put a person at risk for depression or depression symptoms. Lack of sleep causes premature aging, and weight gain. This leads to an increased risk of heart disease, obesity and diabetes. These diseases and disorders cause an imbalance in a person's health and wellness. In order to maintain a healthy life and good level of wellness, a person needs to maintain a balance in their life. Their physical activity, nutrition and body maintenance need to be in sync. The lack of sleep disturbs this cycle. Sleepiness tends to cause a person to lack energy which leads to skipping gym work outs and any form

of physical activity. It also leads to overeating and drinking energy drinks. Overeating leads to an assortment of health problems, but energy drinks bring a completely different variable into the equation. Energy drinks are probably the worst thing a person can put into their body. With the chemicals and additives that are within these drinks, it is a miracle that the body can survive them. The chemicals that are not found within normal food that is grown should not be ingested into the body. The human body is not designed to break down these compounds. The accumulation of them can lead to series side effects and sometimes death because of the amount of caffeine or other chemicals within them. One would think why would anyone drink this? The answer would be because they need energy to make it through the day. The brain registers the extra caffeine in the body and keeps it running. Unfortunately the brain is being fooled into thinking that the body is fine and does not require sleep. The reason that we sleep is to rest our body from the day's events. Without sleep, the human body cannot maintain a healthy life or wellness. The level of health and wellness need to be balanced. Without this balance, the body is doomed to failure. Work Cited: Manber, R. (Performer) (2011, June 01). Sleeping well as we age. Health Library Stanford University. [Video podcast]. Peri, C. (n. d.). coping with excessive sleepiness. Retrieved from [http://www. webmd. com/sleep-disorders/excessive-sleepiness-10/10-results-sleep-loss? page= 2](http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/excessive-sleepiness-10/10-results-sleep-loss? page= 2)