

Psychological and physical effects of sleep deprivation

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SLEEP DEPRIVATION Introduction Sleep deprivation is basically sleeping less than what the body needs. The reason for this can be stress, anxiety, excitement or caffeine. In olden times, Sleep deprivation was used by Romans as a way of torturing. Sleep Deprivation has a number of effects on both, the body and the brain.

Psychological Effects of Sleep Deprivation

Sleep Deprivation has more psychological effects than physical. Firstly, lack of sleep causes a person to be confused, irritable and emotionally upset, which may get in the way of his relationship and job. Due to lack of Rapid Eye Movement (REM) Sleep, which is important for complex brain functions, a person experiences impaired memory and learning. A sleep-deprived student will also do badly in school because of this. Without sufficient sleep, a person also feels low self-esteem which results in low confidence level. When one does not sleep much, the brain does not get enough rest. And when this happens, concentration on everyday jobs becomes very difficult and tricky. Carrying out these everyday tasks hence also slows down which means that it would take three times more time for something to be completed by a sleep-deprived individual. Sleep-deprived individuals also sometimes start to hallucinate and judgment also becomes impaired. It has been reported that risky behavior increases when a person is sleep deprived. (Chen, 2008)

Physical Effects of Sleep Deprivation

Sleep deprivation not only affects the mind but also the body. Sleep plays the function of repairing and restoring and lack of sleep results in feeling
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tired all the time. Other common effects include morning headaches, tendency to gain weight, tremors and heart disease. Since sleep deprivation also causes stress, it indirectly has the same effects that stress has on the body. These include activation of the sympathetic nervous system, weak functioning of the immune system (which results in the body being more susceptible to infections and diseases) and sometimes even cancer. Diabetes is also a very common physical effect of lack of sleep. How does happen The body fails to control insulin production because of sleep deprivation and this leads to diabetes. A child who is sleep deprived also experiences impaired growth.

Other than all the effects discussed above, sleep deprived people are also more accident-prone. According to the National Sleep Foundation, 2004, twenty percent of all automobile drivers fall asleep for a few seconds (microsleep) while driving to make up for the sleep they missed on. Imagine what how much damage this can cause to the driver and the people around him. Experiments by Rechtschaffen & Bergmann (1995 and 2002) on rats also show that sleep deprivation can lead to fatal side effects. (Huffman, 2003)

Conclusion

Sleep is very important for daily functioning. The way this world works is for a reason. When people try to disrupt the 24-hour cycle circadian cycle, which is our body clock, it results in effects ranging from confusion to death.

However, sleep-deprived people have a hope as this condition is very easily treatable. But if let untreated, sleep deprivation will keep worsening ones body and mind.

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