



## Well-Being: Sleep....the missing ingredient in your well-being?

When we think about well-being, specifically physical well-being, often the first things that come to mind are physical activity and a healthy diet. While these two elements certainly do contribute to our physical well-being, sleep is also essential and may be the piece that many of us are missing. More and more research is coming out about the importance of sleep and the connection between sleep, health and disease. Even just a few nights of sleep deprivation can wreak havoc on our body, mind and spirit.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, insufficient sleep has been linked to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, and depression, cognitive decline, impaired memory, poor immune function and depressed mood. It is also the leading cause of motor vehicle accidents (1, 2). Unfortunately only 65% of us are getting the recommended seven to nine hours of sleep per night (3). How do you know if you're getting enough? Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are you productive, healthy and happy on seven hours of sleep? Or does it take you nine hours of quality ZZZs to get you into high gear?
- Do you have health issues such as being overweight?
- Are you experiencing sleep problems such as sleep apnea or insomnia?
- Do you depend on caffeine to get you through the day?
- Do you feel sleepy when you're driving?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may be one of the 35% of American adults who is not getting enough sleep, but don't despair. There is hope; you can remedy your sleep problems and feel well rested and energized. To promote healthful sleep Dr. Lawrence Epstein, Program Director of the Sleep Medicine Fellowship Program at Brigham & Women's Hospital suggests we practice good sleep hygiene by (4):

- maintaining a regular sleep-wake schedule
- avoiding caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, and other chemicals that interfere with sleep
- making our bedroom a comfortable sleep environment
- establishing a calming pre-sleep routine
- going to sleep when we're truly tired
- not watching the clock at night
- using light to our advantage by exposing ourselves to light during the day and limiting light exposure in the evening



- not napping too close to our regular bedtime
- eating and drinking enough—but not too much or too soon before bedtime
- exercising regularly—but not too soon before bedtime

If you suspect you may be suffering with a more serious sleep condition such as sleep apnea or insomnia, talk to your doctor or check out the resources at [www.mycigna.com](http://www.mycigna.com). To learn about cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBTi), the only scientifically proven non-drug insomnia treatment, go to [www.cbtforinsomnia.com](http://www.cbtforinsomnia.com) or if you prefer an app, check out SHUTi at [www.myshuti.com](http://www.myshuti.com). You have nothing to lose, but a good night's sleep.

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