

## Importance of Sleep

Sleep is a vital component of good health; it helps both your body and mind to function at their optimal level during the day. Sleep can improve your physical health by maintaining hormone levels that make you full/hungry, support growth and development and repair your muscles. Similarly, a good night’s sleep can improve your brain function and allow you to pay attention, make decisions, learn quickly and be creative.

As we age, the amount of sleep your body needs changes. For example, a newborn baby will sleep 16-18 hours per day whereas an adult should get about 7-8 hours of sleep per day.

Age	Recommended Amount of Sleep
Newborns	16–18 hours a day
Preschool-aged children	11–12 hours a day
School-aged children	At least 10 hours a day
Teens	9–10 hours a day
Adults (including the elderly)	7–8 hours a day

Some people have difficulties with falling asleep and/or staying asleep. One of the best ways to improve quality of sleep is to have a consistent schedule; going to bed and waking up around the same time each day, including weekends. Your body likes predictability and having a stable sleeping routine will help your body to relax at the end of each day. Additionally, take the hour before you go to bed for quiet time by avoiding exercise, TV/computer screen and eating large meals. Following these simple guidelines will help you to feel more rested in the morning.

### Feeling Sleepy:

Some people often feel “sleepy,” falling asleep while watching TV or while eating lunch. This could be due to sleep deficiency or a sleep disorder. Many individuals deal with sleepiness by taking a nap. However, a nap does not provide all of the benefits of a good night of sleep. It is recommended that naps are limited, but if necessary a nap should be taken earlier in the afternoon and for an adult should not last more than 20 minutes.

If despite sleeping well at night you still feel tired throughout the day, then consider visiting a doctor. The doctor will likely recommend that you keep a sleep diary to track when you are sleeping and for how long. The doctor may also recommend that you have a sleep study to further assess the situation.

### Obstructive Sleep Apnea:

The most common sleeping disorder is Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA). OSA is typically characterized by repetitive episodes of snoring followed by long pauses in breath (called apnea), typically lasting 20-40 seconds. One may experience these symptoms for years before the diagnosis is made. OSA can be temporarily caused by an upper respiratory infection but can also be a chronic condition. In adults, individuals with OSA often also suffer from obesity. Losing weight can help to resolve the condition. There are many common symptoms associated with OSA such as sleepiness, loud snoring and restless sleep. Once a patient visits their doctor with the common symptoms, a sleep study conducted before the diagnosis of sleep apnea is made. If someone is diagnosed with sleep apnea, it is treated with a machine called CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure). CPAP helps to prevent episodes of apnea by pushing oxygen into the individual's lungs.

