



Women's Health Research Institute
Putting Women First

January 2014

In This Issue

**Finding the Right sleep
Pattern for YOU**

**Health Tip: Do's & Don't's of
Healthy Napping**

Institute Happenings

Upcoming Events

Related Blogs

**Study's shows exercise is
no quick cure of insomnia**

A simple reason to exercise

**New guidelines for
predicting Cardiovascular
Disease**

Dear Friend,

Happy New Year! We hope you all had a very happy holiday and a great start to the New Year. Now that all the holiday excitement has past, many of us are looking forward to catching up on some sleep! Sleep, in addition to plenty of water and sound nutrition, is vital to a healthy lifestyle.

Understanding sleep and how much of it we get is very important to our health. The Center for Disease Control found that too much or too little sleep is associated with serious and chronic conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Finding the right balance for you and your family is important and a good way to start the new year!

Sincerely,

The Institute Staff

Finding the Right Sleep Pattern for YOU

For some people, sleep is a luxury. These days it may be difficult to maintain a

steady schedule during the day, and by the time evening comes, sleep more often than not becomes *optional* rather than *mandatory* for many women. With all the different hats women can wear, it can be difficult to always implement a healthy sleep routine. But what is a healthy sleep routine for you? Several factors influence how much sleep you need.

One large factor is age. As our bodies change and develop, our need for sleep also changes. It is important to not only know what your sleeping routine should be but also make it a point to be familiar with your family's sleeping patterns. For example you may need to wind down your toddler for a daily nap, while simultaneously keeping your teens active and awake.

Here are the recommended sleep guidelines :

Infants	Toddlers	School-age children	Adults
• 9-10 hours at night, plus 3 or more hours of naps	• 9-10 hours at night, plus 2-3 hours of naps	• 9-11 hours	• 7-8 hours

Other factors that may alter one's sleep needs include pregnancy, previous sleep deprivation, and the quality of sleep achieved.

How Can Lack of Sleep Affect Me?

Weight Gain: A study showed that there is, in fact, a correlation between weight gain and sleep in both men and women. Women who slept less than six hours and more than nine hours were more likely to gain weight (some up to 11 pounds) compared to women who slept the recommended seven hours. Some reasons to explain this are:

- Sleep duration affects hormones regulating hunger such as ghrelin & leptin and stimulates the appetite
- Lack of sleep leads to fatigue and results in less physical activity



Sleep Deprivation: Lack of sleep does not only affect weight gain, but it also has several other outcomes that can be dangerous to your health. Sleep deprivation can happen when you are consistently not sleeping the hours needed for your body. However, sleep deprivation can also occur if you are sleep deprived for even one night. You can often tell if you are sleep deprived if you are abnormally sleepier in the day time. Some risks that have been associated with lack of sleep are:

- Decreased cognitive function and lower brain activity, making it harder for you to process and complete complicated tasks in a timely manner
- Increased irritability.
- High blood pressure or increased blood pressure
- A weakened immune system that can leave you more vulnerable and less prepared if exposed to a virus such as a common cold
- An increase in car and truck accidents
- A decreased interest in social activities that improved quality of life
- Poorer work performance

Treatment Options for Sleeping Problems (over the counter and prescription)

It is highly recommended that you first check with your doctor if you feel an over-the-counter pill is necessary to get adequate sleep. There can be many underlying factors affecting your sleep such as stress, a busy life schedule, or a medical disorder, which is why an assessment from your doctor is necessary to determine if a sleeping aid is appropriate. Side effects of various medications are important to consider, and your doctor can help you determine which sleep aid is right for you. Some of the options to think about and discuss with your doctor are below:

Benadryl, Unisom SleepGels: These are sedating antihistamines. Antihistamines are normally used in allergy medications because they reduce or block histamines which can cause a stuffy nose, your nose and eyes to run, your eyes to itch, and even hives.
Side effects: daytime drowsiness, dry mouth, dizziness, and memory problems.

Melatonin: This is a hormone that helps control your natural sleep-wake cycle. Research suggests that melatonin supplements might be helpful in treating jet lag or reducing the time it takes to fall asleep. The side effects are usually mild.
Side effects: daytime sleepiness, dizziness, and headaches.

Valerian: Supplements made from this plant might reduce the amount of time it takes to fall asleep as well as promote better sleep overall. However, the active ingredient isn't

clear and potency can vary.

Side effects: might include headache, abdominal discomfort, excitability or uneasiness, and heart disturbances.

Lunesta: Works by helping to increase certain chemicals in the brain that cause sleep. Stopping abruptly may cause symptoms of withdrawal such as anxiety, unusual dreams, nausea, and vomiting.

Ambien, Edluar, Zolpimist: These all contain a chemical called Zolpidem. Zolpidem works by helping to increase certain chemicals in the brain that cause sleep and may become less effective over time. Recently the recommended dose for women was lowered because of data showing that next-day blood levels of the drug may be high enough to impair activities that require alertness, such as driving.

Because most sleep medications have some side effects, it is important to consider trying lifestyle interventions first. Try sticking to a regular schedule, avoiding caffeine several hours before you plan to sleep, taking short daytime naps if necessary, exercising regularly, and managing stress. Often these simple lifestyle alterations can help.

Sleep Differences Between Women and Men

Today there is not much research data to indicate *why* it is that women and men are different when it comes to sleep. What research does offer is *how* women and men differ when it comes to sleep and sleep disorders. According to survey data, women suffer from insomnia at two to three times the rate that men suffer. However, men are twice as likely to have their slumber spoiled by sleep apnea, a chronic condition characterized by brief episodes of restricted breathing. It was found that the gap in these numbers could be due to a misdiagnosis. Women and men may experience sleep disorders differently and, therefore, they may be diagnosed for different conditions. For example, according to the [National Sleep Foundation](#), obstructive sleep apnea in women is commonly mistaken for depression, diabetes, hypertension or hypochondria.

Seven Ways to Better Sleep:

1: Stick to a sleep schedule



Being consistent reinforces your body's sleep-wake cycle and helps promote better sleep at night. If you don't fall asleep within roughly 15 minutes, get up and do something relaxing. Go back to bed when you're tired. If you agonize over falling asleep, you might find it even tougher to nod off.

2: Pay attention to what you eat and drink

Don't go to bed either hungry or stuffed. Your discomfort might keep you up. Also limit



how much you drink before bed, to prevent disruptive middle-of-the-night trips to the toilet.

3: Create a bedtime ritual



Do the same things each night to tell your body it's time to wind down. This might include taking a warm bath or shower, reading a book, or listening to soothing music. Relaxing activities can promote better sleep by easing the transition between wakefulness and drowsiness.

Some research suggests that screen time or other media use before bed interferes with sleep, so be wary of using the TV or other electronic devices as a part of your bedtime ritual.

4: Get comfortable



Create a room that's ideal for sleeping. Often, this means cool, dark, and quiet. Consider using room-darkening shades, earplugs, a fan or other devices to create an environment that suits your needs.

Your mattress and pillow can contribute to better sleep. Since the features of good bedding are subjective, choose what feels most comfortable to you. If you share your bed, make sure there's enough room for two. If you have children or pets, set limits on how often they sleep with you - or insist on separate sleeping quarters.

5: Limit daytime naps



Long daytime naps can interfere with nighttime sleep - especially if you're struggling with insomnia or poor sleep quality at night. If you choose to nap during the day, limit yourself to about 10 to 30 minutes and make it during the midafternoon.

If you work nights, you'll need to make an exception to the rules about daytime sleeping. In this case, keep your window coverings closed so that sunlight -which adjusts your internal clock- is hidden.

6: Include physical activity in your daily routine



Regular physical activity can promote better sleep, help you to fall asleep faster, and enjoy a deeper sleep. Timing is important, though. If you exercise too close to bedtime, you might be too energized to fall asleep. If this does occur, put in your exercise earlier in the day.

7: Manage stress



When you have too much to do and too much to think about, your sleep is likely to suffer. To help restore peace to your life, consider healthy ways to manage stress. Start with the basics, such as getting organized, setting priorities, and delegating tasks. Give yourself permission to take a break when you need one. Before bed, jot down what's on your mind and then set it aside for tomorrow.

Sources

1. [The Huffington Post](#)
2. [MayoClinic](#)
3. [WebMD](#)

Author:

Christina Arroyo, Program Coordinator, Women's Health Research Institute

Health Tip: Do's & Don't's of Healthy Napping

Napping can be a necessity for certain age groups such as infants and toddlers. However, adults are encouraged to not take naps throughout the day to maximize the quality of sleep they get at night. Naps are beneficial for:

- Relaxation
- Reduced fatigue
- Increased alertness
- Improved mood
- Improved performance, including quicker reaction time, better memory, less confusion, and fewer accidents and mistakes

However, if done in excess, naps may lead to:

- Sleep inertia: feeling groggy and disoriented after waking up from a nap
- Nighttime sleep problems: short naps generally don't affect nighttime sleep quality for most people. However, if you experience insomnia or poor sleep quality at night, napping might worsen these problems. Long naps might interfere with nighttime sleep.

On the occasion that you must catch up on some lost sleep, here are some tips to a successful and fulfilling nap.

DO take a nap if you:

- Experience new fatigue or unexpected sleepiness
- Are about to experience sleep loss, for example, due to a long work shift
- Want to make planned naps part of your daily routine

DO NOT:

- Take a nap longer than 10-30 minutes
- Resume activities that require extreme focus or quick and sharp responses
- Take a nap close to your regular sleep time or too early after you wake up

Source: [MayoClinic](#)

INSTITUTE HAPPENINGS

House of Representatives Sites Dr. Woodruff's Research

The House of Representatives conducted a Special Order on the House floor on December 11th to discuss NIH funding. Illinois Congresswoman Janice Schakowsky spoke on increasing NIH funding, used spending charts, and cited our own Dr. Teresa Woodruff's research funding hits since the sequester. In her passionate statement, Representative Schakowsky said, "We are hurting the health of Americans and of future Americans in not funding the study of reproductive health, it makes absolutely no sense to cut the funding from the National Institutes of Health."

Join us on February 27 for a performance of *The How and the Why*, to benefit the Women's Health Research Institute

From the writer/producer of television hits like *House of Cards* and *In Treatment* comes this smart and compelling new play about science, family, and survival of the fittest. The benefit performance of *The How and the Why* is underwritten by The Joseph & Bessie Feinberg Foundation. 100% of funds raised go directly to support the programs and services of the Women's Health Research Institute. Please RSVP by Tuesday, February 25th. All guest names and tickets will be at will call the evening of the event. Your contribution is 100% tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Please contact Leslie Rhoton purchase tickets:
Development & Alumni Relations
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine
420 East Superior Street
Arthur J. Rubloff Building, 9th Floor
Chicago, IL 60611

312.503.0788 Phone | 312.503.6743 Fax | leslie.rhoton@northwestern.edu

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monthly Forum: January 21, 2014, Todd A. Kuiken, MD/PhD talk on Building Bionics

Sharing is Daring: Your Voice Making Change, Online and Off Feat Deanna Zandt

February 1, 2014, 7th Annual Women's Cardiovascular Health Symposium

[Forward email](#)



Try it FREE today.

This email was sent to b-cushing@northwestern.edu by womenshealthresearch@northwestern.edu | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Northwestern University | Inst for Women's Health Rsrch | 30E E Superior St, Lurie 10-121 | Chicago | IL | 60611