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HEALTH
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Sleep for Better Health
Washington Elementary School District EBT

When you think of ways to improve or maintain your health, you may tend to focus mainly on diet and exercise. One of the most important things you can do to take care of yourself is something easily overlooked—getting enough sleep.

The benefits of better sleep

Sleep plays a vital role in your overall health and well-being. Getting the right amount of quality sleep each night can help protect your mental and physical health and improve your performance in your daily tasks.

Sleep is important no matter your age, gender or level of physical activity. Here are the reasons why.

Sleep supports healthy brain function. Quite simply, sleep makes your brain work better. If you think about it, your brain works hard during your waking hours. It's constantly processing information, solving problems and learning new things. While you sleep, you're resting your brain, giving it time to form new pathways to help you the next day.

Research has shown that lack of sleep actually alters brain activity. You may have trouble making decisions, solving problems, learning new things and controlling your emotions.

Sleep improves your physical health. Sleep is involved in healing and repairing your heart and blood vessels, and has been linked to helping control weight. Resting helps maintain a healthy balance of hormones involved in hunger. So when you don't get enough sleep, these hunger hormone levels rise and may cause you to eat more.

Your immune system relies on sleep to function well. In fact, lack of sleep can even make it more difficult for you to fight illness. Sleep also plays a huge role in healthy growth and development for children and teens.

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/sdd/why)

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Sleep helps you perform well. Research shows that a good night's sleep leads to higher productivity, improved reaction times and a better attention span. It's not only important to you that you get enough sleep—peers are counting on it! If you aren't sleeping well, it can affect your ability to work, drive and pay attention.

Why it's ok to snooze longer

More sleep has been shown to improve:
- Memory
- Inflammatory conditions
- Creativity
- Performance

Make sure you get the recommended amount of sleep each night: nine to eleven hours for young children; eight to ten hours for teens; and seven to nine hours for adults.

Tips for better sleep

You can take steps to improve your sleep patterns. After a good's night sleep, you may find that you're happier and more productive.

- **Be consistent**. Try to go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day, if your schedule allows it. Avoid staying up late and sleeping in on weekends.
- **Refrain from stimulants and large meals before bed**. Caffeine, nicotine and alcohol can interfere with your sleep. Feeling full or hungry can also prevent you from dozing.
- **Wind down**. Try to give yourself an hour to relax before actually going to bed. Don't do strenuous exercise and tune out from screen time.
- **Set up a sleep haven**. Keep cool and dark.