



Sleep quality and the effects on emotional and mental wellbeing

You need sleep so your body and mind can function properly. The non-stop pace of modern life and our 24/7 connectivity to the world can make getting a proper night's sleep a challenge.

People who sleep poorly are more likely to develop significant mental health concerns, including depression and anxiety, than those who sleep well. As well as affecting your concentration and mood, lack of sleep has also been linked to a range of physical problems, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and even premature death.

How much sleep do we really need?


- 14-17 years old: **8-10 hours per night**
- Adults: **7-9 hours per night**

4 impacts of sleep deprivation

-  **1. Emotional wellbeing** – poor sleep is closely linked to depression and a lowered emotional wellbeing. Research shows that 60-90% of individuals with depression have insomnia.
-  **2. Weight Gain** – lack of sufficient sleep tends to disrupt the hormones that control hunger and appetite. Fatigue caused by lack of sleep can also discourage you from exercising.
-  **3. Weakened immune function** – sleep deprivation can reduce the effectiveness of your immune system.
-  **4. Heart Disease** – research has shown that short term sleep deprivation has been linked with several well-known risk factors for heart disease, including higher cholesterol levels and higher blood pressure.

3 impacts of good sleep habits

-  **1. Better memory** – sleep consolidates our recent memories for long-term storage. The ability to quickly and accurately recall recent information and conversations is vital to both individual productivity and workplace efficiency.
-  **2. Improved mood** – while you sleep, your brain processes emotions. Your mind needs this time to restore your emotional resilience, allowing you to react intentionally to situations throughout your waking hours. When you reduce your volume or quality of sleep, your brain loses time to process emotions and you may find yourself experiencing negative emotional reactions.
-  **3. Sharpened focus and concentration** – studies show that bad sleep leads to a compromised ability to focus and make decisions. Our brains fail us after a sleepless night because we can't properly regulate the part of our brain associated with consciousness and alertness and decision-making.

 ***Focusing on improving your sleep quality and quantity will positively influence other aspects of your life and provide you with the energy and mental clarity to complete daily tasks with greater ease, accuracy and efficiency.***

Tips to improve your sleep



Avoid alcohol/caffeine/heavy meals at nighttime – these substances have far reaching impacts on your physical and mental health, with disrupted sleep being just one. If you can, avoid eating large meals two to three hours before bedtime.



Aim for regular sleep patterns – helps your body establish a healthy sleep routine by going to bed and waking up around the same time each day (if possible).



Wind down – your body requires time to shift into sleep mode, so try and spend the last hour before bed doing a calming activity such as reading a book or meditation.



Avoid certain stimulants before bedtime – using stimulants before bed such as your phone, laptop or TV can make it hard to fall asleep. The particular type of light emanating from some screens can activate the brain, making it difficult to fall asleep.



Exercise – triggers an increase in body temperature, and the post-exercise drop in temperature may promote falling asleep. Exercise may also reduce insomnia by decreasing anxiety and depressive symptoms.



Ask for help if you need it – if you regularly wake up feeling unrefreshed, have many restless nights, have trouble getting to sleep or find that being tired is affecting your mood, seek guidance from your GP or Health Professional. Sometimes undiagnosed health conditions, like sleep apnoea, can impact sleep quality.

For more tips see:



Sleep Cycle - www.sleepcycle.com
Sleep Cycle tracks your sleep patterns and includes soothing melodies and vibrations to help wake you up without loud alarms.



Smiling Mind - www.smilingmind.com.au
Smiling Mind helps build individual mental health and wellbeing through positive, pre-emptive tools based on mindfulness meditation.



Headspace - www.headspace.org.au
Headspace is a good introduction to mindfulness, as it guides you through 10 days of mindfulness activities and includes short videos.

Additional resources

If you, or someone you know may need assistance, please refer to any of the below help lines or additional resources:

- Your workplace EAP (line open 24/7) – 1300 687 327
- Health for Life hub for detailed fact sheets and activities for you and the family

Resources upon request.

