

Tip Sheet



Sweet Dreams – Why Sleep is Important to our Mental Health

- ☞ **What is sleep?** Sleep is not just a “time out” from our busy schedules; it is essential for good health, mental and emotional functioning and safety. Not getting enough sleep can result in daytime sleepiness, poor decision-making, interference with learning and accidents. People with chronic insomnia are more likely than others to develop several kinds of psychiatric problems.
- ☞ **How much sleep do adolescents need per night?** at least between 8.5 and 9.5 hours
- ☞ **What is the #1 cause of sleep difficulties?** Stress
- ☞ **What are some signs of lack of sleep?** Irritability, moodiness and disinhibition. With significant sleep deprivation, a person may then start to experience apathy, slowed speech and flattened emotional responses, impaired memory and an inability to be novel or multitask.
- ☞ **What are some tips for getting better sleep?**
 - Don't drink or eat caffeine four to six hours before bed and minimize daytime use
 - Avoid heavy meals before sleep
 - Get regular exercise
 - Minimize noise, light and excessive hot and cold temperatures where you sleep
 - Develop a regular bed time and go to bed at the same time each night
 - Attempt to go to bed earlier every night for certain period; this will ensure that you're getting enough sleep
 - Don't hit the snooze alarm over and over again (This on and off again effect of dozing and waking causes shifts in the brain-wave patterns and impairs mental functioning during the day.)
 - Avoid multi-tasking before going to bed. (Doing work, watching TV and using the computer, both close to bedtime and especially in the bedroom, hinders quality sleep. Violent shows, news reports and stories before bedtime can be agitating and interfere with sleep.)
 - Relax your mind (meditation & listening to soothing music, can be helpful)
 - Unwind by keeping the lights low
 - Don't nap too much. Naps of more than 30 minutes during the day may keep you from falling asleep later.
 - Avoid all-nighters. Don't wait until the night before a big test to study. Cutting back on sleep the night before a test may mean you perform worse than you would if you'd studied less but had more sleep.
- ☞ **What should I do if I'm having sleep problems?** If your sleep problems last for longer than a week and are bothersome, or if sleepiness interferes with the way you feel or function during the day, seek help from your doctor.
- ☞ **If you're not getting enough sleep, it's hard to look and feel your best. Schedule "sleep" as an important item on your schedule to help you stay creative, happy, and healthy!!!**