

Understanding and improving sleep

Why do we need sleep?

Memory, Learning and Social Processes

Sleep enables the brain to organise new information and store it properly. REM sleep activates the parts of the brain that control learning. The parts of the brain that control emotions, decision-making and social interactions slow down dramatically during sleep, allowing optimal performance when awake.

Nervous System

Some sleep experts suggest that neurons used during the day repair themselves during sleep. When we experience sleep deprivation, neurons become unable to perform effectively and the nervous system is impaired.

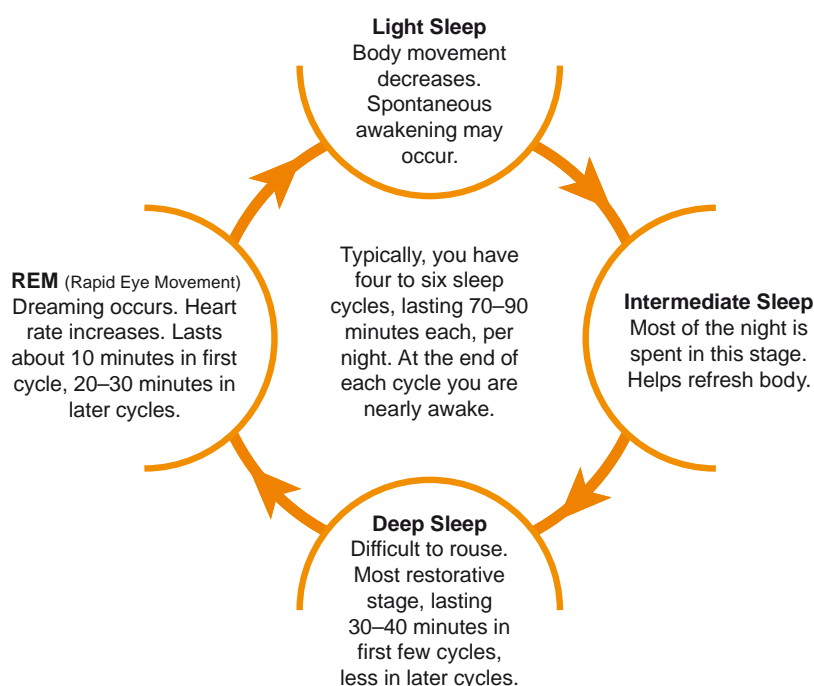
Immune System

Sleep also enables the immune system to function effectively. During deep sleep, the body's cells increase production while proteins break down at a slower rate. Without proper sleep, the immune system becomes weak and the body becomes more vulnerable to infection and disease.

Growth and Development

Children need much more sleep than adults. Growth hormones are released during sleep, so sleep is vital to proper physical and mental development. The effects (positive and negative) of sleep for babies and children are magnified. Tired children are often cranky, fussy and become easily frustrated and difficult. It is often easier for adults to interpret and remedy the effects of tiredness in children than for them to listen to their body's own signals for more rest.

Your Natural Sleep Cycle



Top 10 ways of improving your sleep

Sleep is essential to keep you physically and mentally healthy. Here are some things you can do to help you get the sleep you need.

Light in the Bedroom

The darker the bedroom the easier you'll find it to sleep. So choose some dark curtains.

Alcohol and Sleep

A drink just before bedtime may initially make you sleepy, but it's not a good idea in the long run.

Caffeine and Sleep

Exercise and Sleep

Exercise may be just the thing to help you sleep. Try aerobics or a brisk walk early in the day, and relaxation exercises at bedtime.

Try a little music

From the beginning of time, music has played an important part in the lives of men. There's something in the rhythm and cadence that leads to deeper states of consciousness.

Your Diet and Sleep

What you eat, how much you eat, and even when you eat all contribute to the quality of your sleep.

Smoking and Sleep

Nicotine is a stimulant, just as disruptive to sleep patterns as caffeine or alcohol. It's wise never to smoke as bedtime approaches. In fact, it's best never to smoke!

How About Hypnosis?

You are not actually asleep during the hypnosis session, but the deep state of relaxation, the removal of worries and tensions, and the elimination of stress are all great methods of getting to sleep.

Routines and Sleep

Many people have certain rituals they follow before going to bed. My mother, for instance, couldn't fall asleep without her glass of warm milk.

Learn to Relax

There are many ways to relax. Try using the powers of your mind through meditation, relaxation techniques or self hypnosis.