

GET THE BEST REST

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Not sleeping enough and not sleeping well is not OK. As a matter of fact, there is quite a price to pay. It may surprise you to learn that chronic sleep deprivation, for whatever reason, significantly affects your health, performance, safety, and pocketbook.

There are several causes of sleep deprivation. The stresses of daily life may intrude upon our ability to sleep well, or perhaps we trade sleep for more work or play. We may have a medical or mental-health condition that disrupts our sleep. An unrecognized sleep disorder may also be the cause of chronic sleep deprivation.

Some of the consequences of sleep deprivation include:

<u>Short Term</u>	<u>Long Term</u>
Decreased performance and alertness	Heart attack
Memory and cognitive impairment	Stroke
Stress	Obesity
Poor quality of life	Injury from accidents
Occupational injury	Mental impairment
Automobile injury	Depression

From having occasional difficulty sleeping to insomnia, there is a lot you can do to get a better night's sleep, feel refreshed when you awake, and remain alert throughout the day. It's called "sleep hygiene" and refers to those practices, habits, and environmental factors that are critically important for sound sleep. And, most of it is under your control.

Keep these tips in mind if you are trying to improve your sleep hygiene:

1. Stick to a routine—go to bed at the same time every night, including weekends.
2. Set the scene—keep your bedroom dark, cool, and quiet.
3. Watch the caffeine and nicotine—both are stimulants and should be avoided at least 4-6 hrs before bedtime.
4. Do not exercise vigorously just before bed. Keep workouts to mornings, afternoons or early evenings if possible.
5. Although alcohol is a depressant and may help you fall asleep, the subsequent metabolism that clears it from your body when you are sleeping causes a withdrawal syndrome which can cause awakenings, nightmares, and night sweats.
6. Avoid using a TV, laptop, or Blackberry, which can prevent you from falling asleep, within 30 minutes of your bedtime.
7. Use your bed only for sleep and sex. Otherwise you start to associate your bed with other tasks which will interfere with falling asleep when you want to.
8. Develop a relaxing bedtime routine. A consistent, relaxing routine before bed sends a signal to your brain that it is time to wind down, making it easier to fall asleep.

Sleep tight!