

Editorial**Why is Sleep Important?****Mohsin Masud Jan**

Editor

You need sleep as much as you need to breathe and eat. While you're sleeping, those 6-7 hours spent asleep every day is when your body is busy tending to your physical and mental health and getting you ready for another day.

In children and adolescents, hormones that promote growth are released during sleep. These hormones help build muscle mass, as well as make repairs to cells and tissues. Sleep is vital to development during puberty. Sleep is basically vital for every living being.

When you're deprived of sleep, your brain can't function properly, affecting your cognitive abilities and emotional state. If it continues long enough, it can lower your body's defenses, putting you at risk of developing chronic illness. The more obvious signs of sleep deprivation are excessive sleepiness, yawning, and irritability. Chronic sleep deprivation can interfere with balance, coordination, and decision-making abilities. You're at risk falling asleep during the day, even if you fight it. Stimulants like caffeine are not able to override your body's profound need for sleep.

Now, that was just a basic introduction, let's take a closer look at the adverse effects of not getting enough shuteye.

- 1) Sleepiness Can and Does Cause Accidents: Studies show that sleep loss and poor-quality sleep also lead to accidents and injuries on the job. In one study, workers who complained about excessive daytime sleepiness had significantly more work accidents, particularly repeated work accidents. They also had more sick days per accident.
- 2) Sleep Loss Reduces Cognition: In other words, it dumbs you down. It impairs attention, alertness, concentration, reasoning, and problem solving. This makes it more difficult to learn efficiently.
- 3) Puts you at a higher risk for chronic diseases.
- 4) Depression! Lack of sleep can actually, over time, lead to depression. Often, Insomnia and Depression go hand in hand. And often, treating one of them leads to the other going away on its own.
- 5) It can Make you look and feel older! Most people have experienced sallow skin and puffy eyes after a few nights of missed sleep. But it turns out that chronic sleep loss can lead to lackluster skin, fine lines, and dark circles under the eyes. When you don't get enough sleep, your body releases more of the stress hormone cortisol. In excess amounts, cortisol can break down skin collagen, the protein

that keeps skin smooth and elastic. Sleep loss also causes the body to release too little human growth hormone. When we're young, human growth hormone promotes growth. As we age, it helps increase muscle mass, thicken skin, and strengthen bones.

- 6) Lack of sleep can contribute to increased forgetfulness: In 2009, American and French researchers determined that brain events called "sharp wave ripples" are responsible for consolidating memory. The ripples also transfer learned information from the hippocampus to the neocortex of the brain, where long-term memories are stored. Sharp wave ripples occur mostly during the deepest levels of sleep.
- 7) Losing shuteye can make you tip the scales! When it comes to body weight, it may be that if you snooze, you lose. Lack of sleep seems to be related to an increase in hunger and appetite, and possibly to obesity. According to a 2004 study, people who sleep less than six hours a day were almost 30 percent more likely to become obese than those who slept seven to nine hours. Recent research has focused on the link between sleep and the peptides that regulate appetite. Not only does sleep loss appear to stimulate appetite. It also stimulates cravings for high-fat, high-carbohydrate foods. Ongoing studies are considering whether adequate sleep should be a standard part of weight loss programs.
- 8) Sleep loss impairs judgment, specifically about sleep: studies show that over time, people who are getting six hours of sleep, instead of seven or eight, begin to feel that they've adapted to that sleep deprivation -- they've gotten used to it, but if you look at how they actually do on tests of mental alertness and performance, they continue to go downhill. So there's a point in sleep deprivation when we lose touch with how impaired we are.

So, now, the question to ask is, what do we do? In a world, ever growing in its demands, with time running out on us every day, what do we do? The answer after going through the list I've compiled above, is glaringly obvious to me. Regardless of what goes on in life, except for periods of extreme duress, we should preferably aim for at least 6-7 hours of sleep in a day, just to keep us functioning at a healthy optimum.