**Sleep is really important**

**We have written in the past about the importance of sleep. We are being redundant because we want all our readers to understand that everyone needs to get a good night’s rest, or face very serious health threats, including heart attacks.**

Prior to the Pandemic, CDC estimated that 35-50% of Americans did not sleep enough. Now Post Pandemic, it is assumed that more than 50% of us do not sleep enough. To repeat, insufficient sleep has severe life threatening consequences. And you don’t have to be a senior to face these threats to many people, globally, not just here at home.

Insufficient sleep, according to CDC and many health organizations leads to obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, and several other threats to our health, but the scariest threat is that it is a one major cause of heart attacks.

What should we do to get enough sleep. No one wants a heart attack!

Get enough sleep. Most adults need at least 7 hours of sleep each night.

**How much sleep do I need?**

The CDC says that most adults need at least 7 hours of sleep each night. However, more than 1 in 3 American adults say they don’t get the recommended amount of sleep.2 While this may be fine for a day or two, not getting enough sleep over time can lead to serious health problems—and make certain health problems worse.

What health conditions are linked to a lack of sleep?

Adults who sleep less than 7 hours each night are more likely to say they have had health problems, including heart attack, asthma, and depression. Some of these health problems raise the risk for heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. These health problems include:

 High blood pressure. During normal sleep, your blood pressure goes down. Having sleep problems means your blood pressure stays higher for a longer period of time. High blood pressure is one of the leading risks for heart disease and stroke. About 75 million Americans—1 in 3 adults—have high blood pressure.

 Type 2 diabetes. Diabetes is a disease that causes sugar to build up in your blood, a condition that can damage your blood vessels. Some studies show that getting enough good sleep may help people improve blood sugar control.6

 Obesity. Lack of sleep can lead to unhealthy weight gain. This is especially true for children and adolescents, who need more sleep than adults. Not getting enough sleep may affect a part of the brain that controls hunger.6

**What sleep conditions can hurt my heart health?**

Over time, sleep problems can hurt your heart health.

Sleep apnea happens when your airway gets blocked repeatedly during sleep, causing you to stop breathing for short amounts of time. Sleep apnea can be caused by certain health problems, such as obesity and heart failure.

Sleep apnea affects how much oxygen your body gets while you sleep and increases the risk for many health problems, including high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke. It is more common among Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans than among whites.

Insomnia refers to trouble falling sleep, staying asleep, or both. As many as 1 in 2 adults experiences short-term insomnia at some point, and 1 in 10 may have long-lasting insomnia.8 Insomnia is linked to high blood pressure and heart disease. Over time, poor sleep can also lead to unhealthy habits that can hurt your heart, including higher stress levels, less motivation to be physically active, and unhealthy food choices.

For better sleep, get enough natural light, especially earlier in the day. Try going for a morning or lunchtime walk.

**What can I do to get better sleep?**

 Stick to a regular sleep schedule. Go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning, including on the weekends.

 Get enough natural light, especially earlier in the day. Try going for a morning or lunchtime walk.

 Get enough physical activity during the day. Try not to exercise within a few hours of bedtime.

 Avoid artificial light, especially within a few hours of bedtime. Use a blue light filter on your computer or smartphone.

 Don’t eat or drink within a few hours of bedtime; avoid alcohol and foods high in fat or sugar in particular.

 Keep your bedroom cool, dark, and quiet.

Meditation can be very helpful to help with sleeping problems. How does meditation help people sleep better?

Stress is one major reason so many people have trouble sleeping.

Stress causes anxiety and tension, making it hard to fall asleep. In some cases, stress can simply worsen existing sleep issues.

Meditation may help you sleep better. As a relaxation technique, it can quiet the mind and body while enhancing inner peace. When done before bedtime, meditation may help reduce insomnia and sleep troubles by promoting overall calmness.

When you meditate, a variety of physiological changes occur. These changes initiate sleep by influencing specific processes in your body.

According to the researchers, **meditation likely helps in several ways**. Sleep problems often stem from stress and worry, but meditation improves your relaxation response. It also improves control of the autonomic nervous system, which reduces how easily you’re awakened.

**Meditation may also:**

 increase melatonin (the sleep hormone)

 increase serotonin (precursor of melatonin)

 reduce heart rate

 decrease blood pressure

 activate parts of the brain that control sleep

Your body experiences similar changes in the early stages of sleep. As a result, meditation can promote sleep by initiating these changes.

**How to meditate**

Meditation is a simple practice that can be done anywhere, anytime. You don’t need special tools or equipment. In fact, the only thing you need is a few minutes.

However, establishing a meditation routine takes practice. By making time for meditation, you’ll be more likely to enjoy its benefits.

**Here are the basic steps of meditation:**

 Find a quiet area. Sit or lie down, depending on what feels most comfortable. Lying down is preferable at bedtime.

 Close your eyes and breathe slowly. Inhale and exhale deeply. Focus on your breathing.

 If a thought pops up, let it go and refocus on your breathing.

As you try meditation for sleep, be patient with yourself. A meditation practice is just that — a practice. Start by meditating for 3 to 5 minutes before bed. Over time, slowly increase the time to 15 to 20 minutes. It’ll take time to learn how to quiet your mind.

Let’s look at specific meditation techniques that tend to work well for sleep and how to do each one.

**Mindfulness meditation**

Mindfulness meditation involves focusing on the present. It’s done by increasing your awareness of your consciousness, breathing, and body.

If you notice a thought or emotion, simply observe it, then let it pass without judging yourself.

**How to do mindfulness meditation**

 Remove all distractions from your room, including your cell phone. Lie down in a comfortable position.

 Focus on your breathing. Inhale for 10 counts, then hold your breath for 10 counts. Exhale for 10 counts. Repeat five times.

 Inhale and tense your body. Pause, relax, and exhale. Repeat five times.

 Notice your breath and body. If a body part feels tight, consciously relax it.

 When a thought comes up, slowly return your focus to just your breathing.

Hope these helps us get all the sleep we all need to survive and live healthier lives.

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**SOURCES:**

**Sleep *<https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/sleep.htm>***

**Meditation *https://www.healthline.com/health/meditation-for-sleep***