Nurturing your physical health: Rest

Doctor Sleep

Sleep is essential nourishment for your body and mind. As you rest, growth hormone which promotes cell reproduction, repair and regeneration, is released into the bloodstream and the production of certain types of immune cells peaks. Although you might not be able to control all of the factors that interfere with your sleep, you can adopt habits that encourage better sleep. Start with these simple sleep tips.

Stick to a sleep schedule

Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends, holidays and days off. Being consistent reinforces your body's sleep-wake cycle and helps promote better sleep at night. There's a caveat, though. If you don't fall asleep within about 15 minutes, get up and do something relaxing. Go back to bed when you're tired. If you agonize over falling asleep, you might find it even tougher to nod off.

Create a sleep-friendly bedroom

Often, this means cool, dark and quiet. Consider using black-out curtains to keep street light or early-morning light out and try earplugs if you are easily disturbed by noise. Keep your décor simple and calm – avoid clutter as this can trigger your stress response. Since the features of good bedding are subjective, choose what feels most comfortable to you. If you share your bed, make sure there's enough room for two.

Pay attention to what you eat and drink

Don't go to bed either hungry or stuffed. Your discomfort might keep you up. Also limit how much you drink before bed, to prevent disruptive middle-of-the-night trips to the toilet. Nicotine, caffeine and alcohol deserve caution, too. The stimulating effects of nicotine and caffeine take hours to wear off and can wreak havoc on quality sleep. And even though alcohol might make you feel sleepy at first, it can disrupt sleep later in the night.

Limit daytime naps

Long daytime naps can interfere with night-time sleep — especially if you're struggling with insomnia or poor sleep quality at night. If you choose to nap during the day, limit yourself to about 10 to 30 minutes and make it during the mid-afternoon. If you work nights, make an exception to the rules about daytime sleeping. In this case, keep your window coverings closed so that sunlight, which adjusts your internal clock, doesn't interrupt your daytime sleep.

Create a bedtime ritual

Do the same things each night to tell your body it's time to wind down. This might include taking a warm bath or shower, reading a book, or listening to soothing music — preferably with the lights dimmed. Relaxing activities can promote better sleep by easing the transition between wakefulness and drowsiness.

Include activity in your daily routine

Regular physical activity can promote better sleep, helping you to fall asleep faster and to enjoy deeper sleep. Timing is important, though. If you exercise too close to bedtime, you might be too energized to fall asleep. If this seems to be an issue for you, exercise earlier in the day.

Implement a tech curfew

The light radiating from television, smartphone and computer screens has been found to interfere with the body's circadian rhythm. A study by researchers at Harvard Medical School found that particular frequencies of light disrupted production of the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin.
Turn off devices and TVs at least an hour before you plan to go to sleep!

Manage stress

When you have too much to do and too much to think about, your sleep is likely to suffer. To help restore peace, consider healthy ways to manage stress. Start with the basics, such as getting organized, setting priorities and delegating tasks. Give yourself permission to take a break when you need one. Share a good laugh with an old friend. Before bed, jot down what's on your mind and then set it aside for tomorrow.

Know when to contact your doctor

Nearly everyone has an occasional sleepless night — but if you often have trouble sleeping, contact your doctor. Identifying and treating any underlying causes can help you get the better sleep you deserve.

PDST
Professional Development Service for Teachers | An tSeirbhís um Fhorbairt Ghairmiúil do Mhúinteoirí