

Importance of Sleep

In our society we are constantly finding ways to increase the production of goods and services. To maintain this kind of lifestyle, we must push ourselves to be ever more efficient workers. However, there is only so much time in each day, and with so many tasks to complete and deadlines to meet, sacrifices must be made. Unfortunately, this lifestyle has led to a deprivation of sleep. Sleep is important to all of us and should not be neglected for even one day because without it, the mind wears down and becomes less productive. It is integral to the functioning of society and is also vital to the growth of our bodies and minds during adolescence. A lack of sleep contributes to accidents and stress, which may cause health problems.

Most of us strive to be efficient in our endeavors and many times that means giving up what comes second in demand. We want to gain a positive outcome from our efforts, but scrimping on sleep may not be the best method in the long run. Getting six or less hours of sleep in one night can “reduce mental capacity, physical energy and cause depression and mood swings” (www.mentalhealthcorner.com). The Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that an average worker in America gets 8.7 hours of sleep each night. But sleeping at irregular times disrupts circadian rhythms, which can cause tiredness during the day. If we really want to be efficient, it may be a better choice to keep a steady and sufficient sleep cycle.

School can be very demanding and sometimes it is necessary to pull all-nighters. But losing too much sleep can result in long-term setbacks to overall health. The average male stops growing in early twenties and females around sixteen. But during adolescence, the chemical known as Human Growth Hormone (HGH) plays a critical role in forming a complete and mature body. A great deal of this hormone is produced during sleep and is released mostly

during the Slow Wave Sleep (SWS) phase. “A lack of slow wave sleep will then result in less HGH produced, and thus a vicious cycle is formed” (www.hghtalk.com).

The British Journal *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* reported that sleep deprivation can have some of the same hazardous effects as being drunk by affecting “coordination, reaction time and judgment.” Of course driving while sleep-deprived does not hold the same severity of punishment by the law as drunk driving, but the risk is highly comparable. People who are sleep-deprived are also more likely to show signs of “road rage.” The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) states, “drowsy driving is responsible for more than 100,000 car crashes, 71,000 injuries, and 1,550 deaths every year” (www.mentalhealthcorner.com).

Accidents are not the only dangers of sleep deprivation. Stress may also be a harmful product of fatigue. A study in Science Daily stated, “...younger adults who sleep fewer than eight hours a night have higher risks of psychological distress, often a combination of high levels of depressive and anxious symptoms” (www.scientificamerican.com). This kind of chronic stress from shortened sleep periods is dangerous because it over activates our immune system to produce pro-inflammatory cytokines which, “increases our risk of heart disease, osteoporosis, and autoimmune diseases including type 2 diabetes” (www.scientificamerican.com).

The National Sleep Foundation states that adults need anywhere from seven to nine hours of sleep and adolescents need 8.5 to 9.25 hours each night. Getting a good night sleep is crucial to societies’ well-being. It keeps the next generation healthy and energetic. It sustains the workers of today and optimizes their performance. But most of all, it keeps us safe from potentially fatal accidents by keeping us awake and alert. Approximately one third of our lives are spent sleeping. The need for so much time to be spent asleep shows the importance that sleep

holds for mammals. It is not simply an adaptation to conserve energy but an essential part of human life. If we want to continue to grow as a society, we must acknowledge the need for adequate sleep just as we acknowledge the need for air, food and water.

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