

# For good health, sleep well



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for Wallowa County Chieftain**

Though still not fully understood by science, sleep is undeniably one of the most basic of human needs. Yet according to the National Sleep Foundation, millions of people do not get enough sleep, compromising safety and efficiency, as well as mental and physical health.

Sleep is involved in the healing and repair of body systems, including the heart and blood vessels. It also helps the brain function properly. Ongoing sleep deficiency is linked to increased risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, stroke and obesity. Adequate sleep supports healthy growth and development, boosts immunity, and regulates hormone balance.

From a behavioral standpoint, sufficient sleep helps people pay attention, cooperate, make decisions, solve problems, and cope with change and challenges. Lack of sleep has been linked to slower reaction time, aggression, depression, increased risk-taking, and stress. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that at least 100,000 crashes are the direct result of driver fatigue each year.

While sleep needs vary between individuals, the National Sleep Foundation recommends that adults get 7-9 hours of sleep for optimal health. Teenagers should get 8-10 hours of sleep each night, and younger children 9-11 hours or more. Experts say that if you feel drowsy during the day or can't generally wake in the morning without an alarm clock, you aren't getting enough sleep.

## Tips for better sleep

### **1. Stick to a regular sleep/wake schedule.**

Go to bed at the same time each night and consider instituting a bedtime ritual for yourself (dimmed lights, bath, reading, etc.) to signal to your body that it is time to wind down.

### **2. Pay attention to what you eat and drink.**

Limit caffeine during the day, and avoid for four to six hours before bed. Do not eat a heavy meal or consume alcohol right before sleep.

### **3. Get regular exercise during the day.**

Some people find that exercising in the evening can interfere with sleep, but in general, exercise improves both the quality and ease of sleep.

### **4. Minimize distractions where you sleep,**

including noise, light, electronic devices, and excessive heat or cold.

### **5. Get comfortable.**

Invest in a good mattress, quality bedding, and ample pillows and avoid restrictive clothing.

Practice relaxation, breathing, and meditation.

### **6. Limit daytime naps.**

If you are making up for lost sleep during the day, you are likely perpetuating the problem.

### **7. Talk to your doctor if necessary.**

Identifying and treating underlying causes for chronically poor sleep — such as apnea, acid reflux, restless leg syndrome, or side effects from medication — can help restore your pleasant dreams.