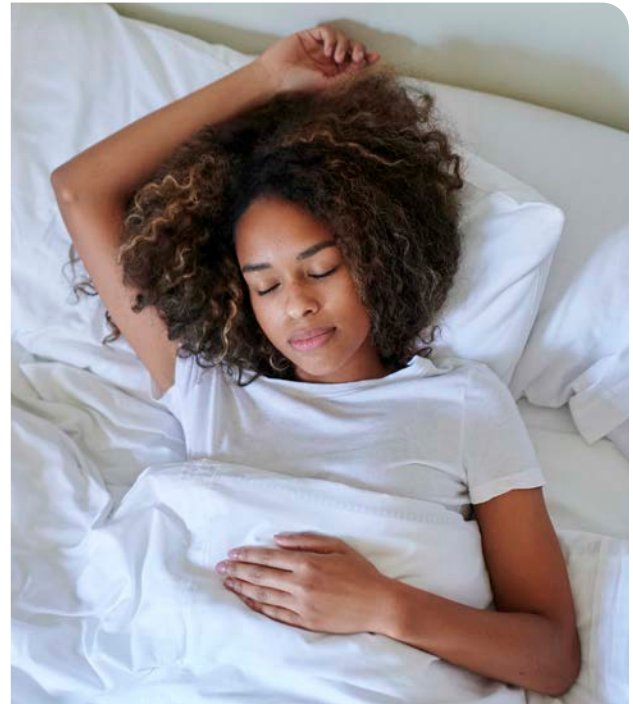




How Does Sleep Affect My Health?

According to the Centers for Disease Control, 1 in 3 U.S. adults do not get enough sleep every day. It may surprise you, but getting a good night's rest is one of the most important things you can do for your heart, your mind and your overall health.

Good sleep benefits your whole body including your heart and brain with effects such as improved mood, memory and reasoning. The amount and quality of sleep you get can influence your eating habits, mood, memory, internal organs and more. Too much or too little can be harmful.



How much sleep do I need?

Adults should aim for an average of seven to nine hours of sleep a night, and babies and kids need more depending on their age.

When you sleep, your brain processes all the information it has taken in throughout the day. That's one reason babies and children who have lots of new experiences each day need more sleep than adults.

Other factors besides age, such as being sick, also influence how much sleep you need.

How can poor sleep affect my health?

Poor sleep may put you at higher risk for:

- Alzheimer's disease
- Cardiovascular disease
- Cognitive decline and dementia
- Depression
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- High blood sugar
- High cholesterol
- Infections
- Obesity

What is quality sleep?

Tossing and turning in bed for hours isn't as good for you as seven nonstop hours of sleep. Quality sleep needs to be of ample length. That means you need several hours of continuous restful sleep each night.

Ideally, you want to go through multiple cycles of all five sleep stages each night. The stages start with feeling drowsy and progress through deeper sleep until you reach rapid eye movement or REM sleep.

What are the benefits of healthy sleep?

Some of the benefits of quality sleep include:

- Less risk of chronic disease
- Stronger immune system
- Healing and repair of cells and tissues
- Better brain function, such as alertness, focus, learning, memory, reasoning and problem-solving
- More creativity and productivity
- Improved mood and energy
- Better ability to build muscle
- Quicker reflexes

(continued)



How Does Sleep Affect My Health?

How can I improve the quality of my sleep?

You can make small changes in your daily habits that could make a big difference in the quality of your sleep. Start making healthier choices to sleep better today.

- Be physically active during the day. It can relieve stress, boost brain function and help you sleep better at night.
- Keep your nighttime room temperature cool. About 65° F is recommended for good sleep for adults.
- Make your sleeping space as comfortable, quiet and dark as possible.
- Avoid heavy meals close to bedtime. Allow 2-3 hours for your food to digest to avoid acid reflux.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol for at least four hours before bed. They can cause light or disrupted sleep.
- Establish a bedtime routine. Try to go to bed and wake up at about the same time each day. Set a daily bedtime alarm, counting backwards 7-9 hours from your ideal waking time.
- Keep your phone and electronic devices out of the bedroom. Electronics can disrupt your sleep cycle. Try reading, listening to music, practicing mindfulness or meditation before bed instead.



- Break the snooze button habit. Sleeping past your alarm can make you groggier.

Pick one activity and commit to adding it to your bedtime routine tonight. Each week, try adding another. Making sleep a priority can improve your health.

If you've tried everything and still can't sleep well, you may have a sleep disorder. The most common are insomnia, narcolepsy, restless legs syndrome and sleep apnea. If you think you have a sleep disorder, talk to your health care professional so they can assess your symptoms and recommend treatment options.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families at HeartInsight.org.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

How much sleep should I get a night?

Do I need a sleep study?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.