Sleep is Good!
Sleeping is a basic human need, like eating, drinking, and breathing. It is important for good health and well-being throughout your lifetime. Sleep deficiency can lead to physical and mental health problems, injuries, loss of productivity, and even a greater risk of death.

Overview
The two basic types of sleep are rapid eye movement (REM) and non-REM sleep. Non-REM sleep is a “deep sleep.” Dreaming occurs during REM sleep. Generally, non-REM and REM sleep occur in a regular pattern of 3–5 cycles each night.

Your ability to function and feel good when awake depends on whether you are getting enough total sleep and enough of each type of sleep as well as the time of day you are sleeping.

We have an internal "body clock" that controls when we are awake and when we are ready for sleep. This clock follows a 24-hour repeating rhythm called the circadian rhythm.

If you are not getting enough sleep, or are sleeping at the wrong times, or have poor quality sleep, you will likely not feel refreshed and alert when you wake up and you will feel tired all through the day. Sleep deficiency can interfere with work, school, driving, and social functioning. You might have trouble learning, focusing, and dealing with situations. You might find it hard to judge other people's emotions and reactions.

Sleep deficiency is a common public health problem in the United States. About 7–19 percent of adults are not getting enough rest or sleep every day. An estimated 50 to 70 million Americans have chronic (ongoing) sleep disorders.

What Makes you sleep
Pressure to sleep builds with every hour that you are awake. This drive for sleep reaches a peak in the evening, when most people fall asleep. A compound called adenosine rises in our brain when you are awake and increasing levels of adenosine signals a shift toward sleep. While we sleep, your body breaks down adenosine.

Our internal body clock is also in sync with certain cues in the environment. Light and darkness help determine when we feel awake and when we feel drowsy. When it gets dark, our body releases a hormone called melatonin which helps you feel drowsy. Melatonin is a popular sleep-aid supplement. Exposure to bright artificial light in the late evening (TV or computer screen) can disrupt this process, making it harder to fall asleep.
Why is sleep important

Getting enough quality sleep at the right times can help protect your mental health, physical health, quality of life, and safety. The way you feel while you are awake depends in part on what happens while you are sleeping. During sleep, your body is working to support healthy brain function and maintain your physical health.

Sleep helps your brain work correctly by preparing it for the next day. It is forming new pathways to help you learn and remember information. It helps you pay attention, make decisions, and be creative. Sleep is involved in the healing and repair of your heart and blood vessels. It also helps maintain a healthy balance of the hormones that make you feel hungry (ghrelin) or full (leptin). Without enough sleep, your level of ghrelin goes up and your level of leptin goes down and this makes you feel hungrier than when you are well-rested.

Without enough sleep you may have trouble making decisions, solving problems, controlling your emotions and behavior, and coping with change. Lack of sleep has been linked to depression, suicide, and risk-taking behavior as well as an increased risk of heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, trouble fighting common infections, and stroke as well as an increased risk of falls and broken bones. That is a lot of negative effects!

Lack of sleep may also lead to “microsleep.” This refers to short periods of sleep that happen when you are normally awake and do not realize it—a dangerous situation! You can not control microsleep. For example, you may be listening to a lecture or watching a film and you might miss some of the information or feel like you do not understand the point. It may be that you slept through part of the lecture or film and was not aware of it. Imagine if you were behind the wheel of a car when this happened!

How much sleep is enough?

If you routinely lose sleep or choose to sleep less than needed, the sleep loss adds up.

Some people nap as a way to deal with sleepiness. Naps may provide a short-term boost in alertness and performance. However, napping does not provide all of the other benefits of night-time sleep. So you really can't make up for lost sleep.

Sleeping more on days off might be a sign that you are not getting enough sleep. Although extra sleep on days off might help you feel better, it can upset your body's sleep–wake rhythm.
Steps to get enough sleep

- Make sure that you give yourself enough time to sleep.
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, whether it is a weekday or weekend. If not, try to limit the difference to no more than about an hour. Staying up late and sleeping in late on weekends can disrupt your body clock's sleep–wake rhythm.
- Use the hour before bed for quiet time. Avoid strenuous exercise and bright artificial light, such as from a TV or computer screen. The light may signal the brain that it is time to be awake.
- Avoid heavy and/or large meals within a couple hours of bedtime. (Having a light snack is okay.)
- Avoid alcoholic drinks before bed as well as nicotine and caffeine (including caffeinated soda, coffee, tea, and chocolate). Nicotine and caffeine are stimulants that can interfere with sleep.
- Spend time outside every day (when possible) and be physically active.
- Keep your bedroom quiet, cool, and dark (a dim night light is OK, if needed).
- Take a hot bath or use relaxation techniques such as meditation before bed.
- Try Chamomile tea or blends with Chamomile such as with Lemon balm and valerian root. Cinnamon and banana teas are ones to try as well. To make banana tea, cut off both ends of the banana, but do not peel it. Place the entire banana with the peel in a pot of boiling water. Boil for 10 minutes, strain and drink it one hour before bed. (Sleepadvisor.org)
- Lavender is an essential oil (used in “aroma therapy”) to aid in sleep, relaxation and stress relief. It is reported to help one fall asleep faster at bedtime and to sleep more soundly. (Sleepadvisor.org)
- Napping during the day may provide a boost in alertness and performance. However, if you have trouble falling asleep at night, limit naps or take them earlier in the afternoon. Adults should nap for no more than 20 minutes.

Talk to your doctor

Doctors might not detect that you have sleep problems during routine office visits because you are awake. So you should let your doctor or health care provider know if you think you might have a sleep problem. This may include that you cannot fall asleep or have insomnia, if you often feel sleepy during the day or you do not wake up feeling refreshed and alert.

Information source unless otherwise noted:
National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute of the National Institute of Health
https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/sleep-deprivation-and-deficiency
Consumer-centered access for long-term care information, referrals and assessments.

For information, call 382-8481, #9, ext.304

Schenectady County Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services denies no person services or access to service based upon race, color, sex, religion, national origin, marital status and/or handicapping conditions. Schenectady County Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services is primarily funded with County tax dollars. Supplemental funding is through the New York State Office for the Aging under Title III-B/D, III-C-1, III-C-2, III-F of the Federal Older Americans Act, and New York State Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly (EISEP), Community Services for the Elderly Act (CSE), Congregate Services Initiative (CSI), and the Wellness In Nutrition (WIN).

OFA – Sleep is Good June 2019

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**Hope you get a Good Nights’ Sleep Word Puzzle**

T O Q S R F O I O O Z Z G Y D
R T P Y Q G G U B E K A W A E
E L I M O M A H C K T V M S H
R Q N Z K E M B V B Z E S N S
D E F I C I E N C Y R E O S E
M C M A N D P J J H N I S E R
V I P A T O Z U B K T M C V F
M A C I E R T O R A B G H E E
O B M R J R D A V I P C E N R
X E X K O Y D I L K Y D D H W
S I F D C S R P T E A D U O S
I O B L P P L E U X M X L U S
S O O Z E E X E R C I S E R Q
R C V D C O J L E O T M F S R
K T P S O W E S Q P G X H X X

Created by [Puzzlemaker](https://www.discoveryeducation.com) at DiscoveryEducation.com

**Do you have questions or concerns about what to eat?**

If you are participating in services offered by Schenectady County’s Senior and Long Term Care services, you are eligible to have a free consultation with a Registered Dietitian.

Call Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County at 518-372-1622, ext. 269. Leave a message, if necessary, for dietitian to call you back.

**Check out our website for nutrition resources:**
[http://cceschenectady.org/nutrition-for-seniors](http://cceschenectady.org/nutrition-for-seniors)