

We all know that getting a good night's sleep is important. Our day goes much better when we wake up feeling refreshed, energized and ready to tackle the day. Unfortunately in our busy world, this is not the norm for many people.

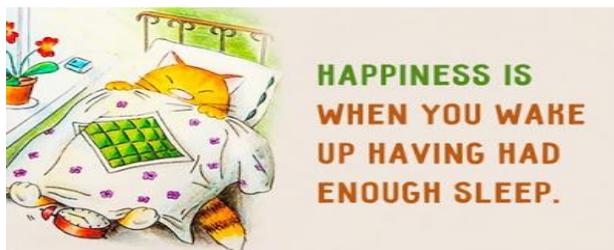
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than one-quarter of the U.S. population reported occasionally not getting enough sleep, with nearly 10% experiencing chronic insomnia. This lack of sleep not only affects our energy levels, it can also harm our hearts.



The lack of sleep doesn't necessarily cause heart disease, but it increases the risk factors for heart disease, according to a study published by the American Heart Association (AHA 2016). They found that people who sleep less than six hours per night tend to have high blood pressure, higher blood sugars, greater inflammation, and more obesity than those who sleep longer.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SLEEP?

1. Sleep activates the body's repair mechanisms—Eight hours of sleep are recommended each night for your body to repair itself. Not enough sleep is associated with increased calcium buildup in your heart's arteries that can cause heart attacks. People who sleep less than six hours each night have the greatest risk of developing these changes in the arteries of their heart.
2. Sleep allows your heart to “rest”—Your heart slows down during sleep, causing a drop in blood pressure. This lower pressure means that your heart doesn't have to work so hard.
3. Sleep improves oxygenation— The oxygen in your blood is necessary to keep your heart and body well. This improved oxygenation while you sleep, is key in supporting good heart health.



Now that you know how important sleep is to heart health, here are some things to help you get a better night's sleep:

- Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- Avoid daytime caffeinated beverages. Your body may take up to six hours to rid itself of caffeine.
- Avoid having a TV or computer in your bedroom, or reading at night with an e-reader or phone for at least 30 minutes before you go to bed. (The mental stimulation from these devices can make it harder to fall and stay asleep.)
- Get exercise during the day.
- Start a sleep journal. Write down when you go to bed, go to sleep, wake up, get out of bed, take naps, exercise, and consume alcohol and caffeinated beverages. (These findings should help you and your doctor to make a plan for better sleep for you!)

Almost everyone has trouble sleeping once in a while, but if nights of poor sleep turn into an unhealthy nighttime routine, check to see if your habits are to blame. If you have sleep issues, you may need to make an appointment with your health care provider.

The Bible tells us in many places that rest is important. Proverbs 3:24 reminds us that, "When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet."

Sleep is not a luxury, it's vital to your health and well-being. It's worth making some changes if you want to decrease your risk for heart disease.

Sweet dreams!

For more information please go on-line to the American Heart Association at www.heart.org, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at www.nhlbi.nih.gov, or the national Sleep Foundation at www.sleepfoundation.org. You can also check out the Parish Nurse display in the hallway by the Welcome Center or feel free to visit with me in the Parish Nurse office. I would be happy to share my resources with you.

Penny LaBerge
Parish Nurse

**TAKE CARE OF
YOUR HEART**
February is American Heart Month