

What Sleep Has to Do with Weight Loss

In the 80's the ability to live with very little sleep was held up as some kind of badge of honour. The less sleep you needed, the more intelligent you were, and the more highly regarded you were.

Modern scientific research shows that not only were those "sleep rejectors" behaving unintelligently and producing lower-grade, lower levels of work, but they were setting themselves up for serious mental and physical disease.

Sleep deprivation, whether deliberate or unintended, can be considered a relatively modern disease, interfering with the normal operation of all of the body's systems and especially interfering with our metabolism. It's our metabolic rate that determines whether or not we get fat on the food we eat, or burn it up to run our bodies efficiently.

I'm sure you've heard the old story from diet companies that losing weight is simply a matter of getting the right balance between the food you eat (energy in) and the energy you expend in activity (energy out). In fact this is nonsense, because if your metabolism isn't operating as it should, you'll struggle to lose weight no matter what you do.

There are many lifestyle factors that impact on metabolic rate, and sleep is one of them, so quality sleep is a crucial part of any serious weight loss program. The amount of sleep you need is unique to you, though probably it will be around 7 1/2 to 8 hours of good sleep each night. Of course kids need a lot more than that, often more like 12 or 13 hours of sleep nightly.

If you also suffer from a serious illness, like depression for example, quality sleep becomes even more important in your journey toward recovery.

9 Tips to a Better Night's Sleep

1 Guard your sleep time like the precious commodity it is. Who cares what other people think! I'm not talking about welching out on parenting duties at the expense of someone else's sleep, of course! What I'm saying is don't let other people's expectations or selfish behaviour interfere with your sleep needs.

If sleep interruption is beyond your control (for example if you have small children or a sick partner who needs care during the night) make sure you get extra sleep during the day, and also make sure you get some nights off.

2 Routine is the friend of good sleep. When we have a regular routine for most days, we're actually training our brain to shut down really efficiently each night, especially if we schedule in a "slowing down" time each night before bed.

3 Getting calm before going to bed. This means avoiding things that are stimulating to your body or brain, like loud or stressful television or music, arguments, caffeine or alcohol. Conversely you should use dimmed lighting, quiet background music, and laid-back conversation as a way to slow down and get ready for sleep.

4 Dump stress. When people tolerate unacceptable levels of stress in their lives, they can then suffer from intrusive, worried thoughts when they should be sleeping and this can be very distressing. Two powerful techniques, Logotherapy and NeuroStim, can stop these thoughts in their tracks and allow a quick path to the land of nod. You can learn more about these on TopLifeSolutions.com.

5 Is your bedroom actually conducive to good sleep? Is it quiet? Is it dark enough? Is there fresh air? Are your pillows, bed, and coverings, all comfortable and cosy? Do you feel safe and secure?

6 Stay in Bed. Some sleep experts advise you to get up if you can't fall to sleep within 30 minutes, so that in your mind bed is linked only to sleeping. I find this rather silly, since bed can be linked to having sex, reading, resting, daydreaming, and even being ill. Instead I recommend staying in bed so that you train your mind that this is the correct place to be at this time.

There is quite good evidence for my recommendation to stay in your bed. For example if we're helping a new baby to get into a good sleep routine, one of the things we do is try to keep them in their cot and provide as little stimulation as possible even if we have to give an extra bottle or change a nappy. The last thing we'd do is pick them up and go and sit in a bright room with a television on. That'd be teaching them to wake up!

So stay in bed, and use one of many proven relaxation techniques so that if you're not sleeping, you're at least training yourself to maintain a relaxed

state - you're at least "resting".

7 You must be physically active during the day. Your body needs vigorous physical activity in order to properly produce sleep hormones. Mornings or early afternoons are the best times for you to play a sport, or go for that really brisk walk or bike ride.

8 Enjoy good relationships with everyone around you. If you have strained relationships, or adversarial relationships, this will detract from your sense of wellbeing and therefore will definitely impact on your sleep. Get your relationships in shape and you'll enjoy much better sleep.

9 Enjoy a good, healthy diet with lots of variety. If you eat well your body is easily able to produce the hormones required for good sleep. Avoid fad diets like the extreme low-carb diet for example, because this robs the body of the ability to produce adequate melatonin (and also causes depression!).

About the Author

There are 17 lifestyle factors which have a important impact on [weight loss](#), and quality sleep is just one of them. The free book "17 Solutions" spells out each of them and tells you how to get them right! Available courtesy of the Kind Communities Initiative.

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