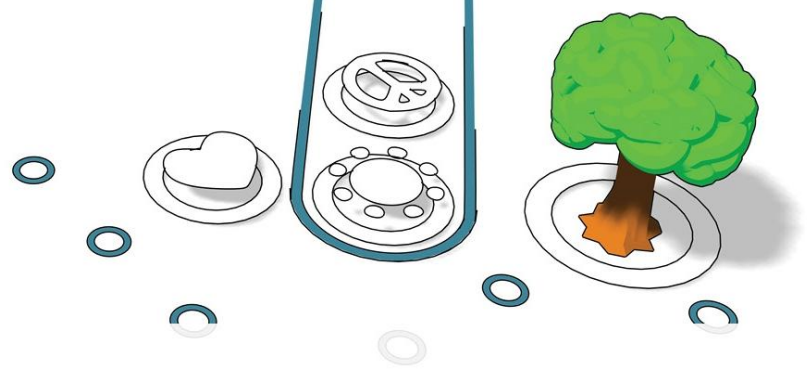


# Think Well, Be Well

Provided by ECBM, LP



## Sleep Matters for Mental Health

When you don't get enough sleep, not only does it affect your physical health, but it also takes a toll on your mental health. In fact, mental health and sleep are so closely related that a lack of sleep can often lead to issues such as anxiety or depression.



**Most adults need at least seven hours of sleep each night, according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.**

Unfortunately, studies consistently show that Americans struggle to get a good night's sleep. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 1 in 3 adults aren't getting enough rest or sleep every day. A lack of sleep can result in physical symptoms (e.g., an increased risk of developing obesity, diabetes and other chronic health conditions) and psychological effects (e.g., low mood, anxiety, irritability and poor cognitive performance). This article explores the relationship between sleep and mental health and provides tips for a better night's sleep.

### The Impact of Sleep on Mental Health

Sleep is essential for optimal health—and that includes mental health. When individuals consistently endure sleep deprivation or encounter poor-quality sleep, a cascade of adverse effects on their mental health ensues. One primary facet that is affected is emotional regulation; inadequate sleep can render individuals more susceptible to mood swings, heightened stress levels and irritability, which can exacerbate the symptoms of anxiety and depression, making it challenging to cope with life's demands.

Furthermore, sleep plays a pivotal role in cognitive functioning. During deep sleep, the brain engages in memory consolidation, emotional processing and toxin removal. Disruptions in this process can compromise the ability to concentrate, make decisions, and effectively solve problems.

Over time, chronic sleep disturbances can contribute to the development or exacerbation of mental health conditions. Addressing sleep problems and prioritizing healthy sleep practices is a significant step in enhancing mental well-being, bolstering emotional resilience and promoting cognitive clarity.

### Tips For a Better Night's Sleep

Sleep and mental health are both complex issues impacted by various factors. However, given their close association, research continues to explore how quality sleep can benefit mental health. Signs of poor sleep quality include not feeling rested even after getting enough sleep, waking up repeatedly during the night and experiencing symptoms of sleep disorders (e.g., snoring or gasping for air).

Sleep quality is often impacted by an individual's health, environment, mental health and lifestyle. Consider the following tips for better sleep:

- **Eat nutritiously.** Good eating habits can help you sleep better and feel energized all day. Also, avoid big meals right before going to bed.
- **Exercise regularly.** A workout can help relieve stress, reset your circadian clock, reduce sleep disorder symptoms and boost your daytime energy level. Just be sure to avoid vigorous exercise close to bedtime.
- **Keep a consistent sleep schedule and routine.** Try to have the same wake-up and bedtimes, including during the weekend.
- **Establish a bedtime routine.** A routine can help your brain unwind and recognize that it's time to sleep. Keep track of bedtime habits that help you fall asleep, like listening to relaxing music, reading before bed or taking a warm bath. Repeat those activities each night.
- **Keep your bedroom cool, dark and quiet.** Create a good sleep environment, including a comfortable room temperature (between 60-67 degrees Fahrenheit), minimal noise and sufficient darkness.
- **Put the electronics away at bedtime.** Blue-light-emitting electronic devices can prohibit you from getting a good night's sleep. To reduce the effects of these sleep-stealing devices, refrain from using them for at least an hour before bed.
- **Avoid the use of alcohol, caffeine and nicotine close to bedtime.** Stimulants like caffeine and nicotine promote alertness, making falling and staying asleep difficult. While alcohol may help you fall asleep at night, it disrupts your sleep and leaves you waking up not as restful. Therefore, it's important to start limiting these substances about four hours before bed.
- **Reduce your fluid intake before bedtime.** While our bodies are programmed to slow urine production during sleep, excessive fluid intake could cause an unwanted trip to the bathroom at night. Try to stop drinking beverages two hours before going to bed.

### Summary

Getting proper sleep is extremely important in improving and maintaining good mental health. Adequate sleep not only aids emotional regulation, reducing the risk of mood disorders, but it also supports cognitive functioning, enhancing your ability to think clearly and make sound decisions. Insufficient sleep may increase negative emotional responses to stressors and decrease positive emotions. As such, chronic sleep deprivation or poor sleep quality can contribute to the development or exacerbation of mental health issues, creating a harmful cycle.

Prioritizing healthy sleep habits is critical for fostering mental resilience, emotional stability and cognitive vitality. Contact a doctor for more information on improving your sleep habits or addressing sleep issues. Additionally, if you're concerned about your mental health, talk to your doctor or a licensed mental health professional, or contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Helpline by calling 800-662-HELP (4357).