

Getting A Good Night's Sleep: Tips and Support

You may feel like you are too busy studying, working or having fun to slow down and get a healthy amount of sleep. In addition, daily stressors may be making it difficult for you to get quality sleep.

Research shows:

- While you sleep your brain is hard at work forming the pathways necessary for learning & creating memories and new insights.
- Without enough sleep you cannot focus or pay attention at your best.
- Inadequate sleep can cause mood problems, affects your immune system & can make you more susceptible to illness.

How much sleep is enough? Seven to nine hours of sleep per night is recommended.

Quality of sleep is as important as quantity:

1. Design your sleep environment to be cool, quiet, dark and comfortable.
2. Using your bed as a study space may cause you to associate it with stress which can interfere with your sleep.
3. Don't lie in bed awake. If you find yourself awake after 20-30 minutes in bed, get up and do some relaxing activity until you feel sleepy, like drinking a cup of Chamomile tea.
4. Take time to wind down before bed. Avoid intense video games & TV programs before bedtime.

What disrupts sleep?

- Stimulants like caffeine in coffee, tea and colas with caffeine.
- Nicotine is a stimulant that can keep you awake or lead to lighter than normal sleep.
- Alcohol can make you fall asleep but prevents deep sleep & REM sleep and tends to make people wake up in the middle of the night when the effect wears off.

Tips for better quality sleep:

- Maintain a regular sleep schedule. Go to sleep & wake up at the same time every day.
- Don't try to "catch up" on sleep by sleeping in late on weekends. It may make it harder to get to sleep at a reasonable hour and make sleep problems worse.
- Develop a "bedtime routine" to train your mind and body to associate sleep with specific activities, like listening to quiet music, drinking a cup of decaf tea or reading for fun.
- Finish eating at least 2-3 hours before bedtime. Avoid large, late evening meals.
- Avoid napping. Sleeping too much or too often can interfere with sleep at night.
- Exercising regularly makes it easier to fall asleep & contributes to sounder sleep.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol close to bedtime.

If you feel your lack of quality sleep is interfering with your ability to function, your mood or behavior call the Student Health Center for an appointment @ 503-352-2269.