

Sleep and your health

Sleep deprivation has been linked to many health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity.

Sleep deprivation includes not getting enough sleep, having a sleep disorder affecting your quality of sleep and sleeping at the wrong time for your body clock.

Studies from the United States and United Kingdom have shown that sleeping less than 6 hours/night increased a person's risk of a heart attack by 20% compared to people who slept 6-9hrs. They also showed that people who slept longer than 9 hrs had an increased risk of heart events. They concluded that getting enough sleep (6-9hrs) but not over sleeping is important to reduce the risk of having a heart attack for some people.

What to do if you are experiencing sleep deprivation

- Keep a sleep diary to record your current pattern of sleep. For example, this one by Sleep Australia, <https://sleepaustralia.com.au/docs/Sleep-Diary-7-Days-Sleep-Australia.pdf>
- Speak with your Dr about your concerns. There are a range of medical conditions, including sleep apnoea, that can affect sleep and you may need a sleep study or other tests. Anxiety and stress are common conditions that can impact on sleep patterns.
- Learn about what affects sleep including some medicines, alcohol and other stimulants <https://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/>
- Access information on strategies to assist you with sleeping better, including "sleep hygiene" <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/healthy-sleep-habits>
- Sleep strategies can include: avoiding eating heavy meals and drinking alcohol close to when you sleep, doing regular exercise, going to bed/getting up at regular times and accessing natural light daily as this impacts your body clock or circadian rhythms. Your bedroom should be quiet, cool and dark if possible.
- Avoid nicotine (e.g. cigarettes) and caffeine, which are both stimulants. The effects of a caffeinated drink can last up to 8 hours.
- Seek professional help if you continue to experience sleep deprivation. Diagnosing causes of sleep deprivation can take time. Finding the right solution/s for your situation is important. Please contact your GP or health professional for more advice and assistance with this.

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