

Lack of sleep and how it effects your weight

Many don't understand that the two are connected. Lack of sleep is detrimental to your health. If you toss and turn or feel like you don't get good, deep sleep on a regular basis you need to take action now. Being overweight makes you more susceptible to being diagnosed with sleep apnea. If a partner tells you that you regularly snore it can be a sign that you have sleep apnea, a dangerous condition. Although everyone's body is different, the National Sleep Foundation recommends that people 24–64 years old should get seven to nine hours of sleep per night – and not less than six.

What happens when you are sleep deprived?

- You may eat more calories. A person who is asleep at 10:30 p.m. will not be eating. But if that same person doesn't go to sleep until 1 a.m., he or she might eat between 10:30p.m. and 1 a.m. Does that sound familiar, all you late-night snackers?
- Lack of adequate sleep translates into a tired body. Does a tired body feel like exercising after work? Probably not.
- Lack of sleep affects our brains and our decision making. A well-rested mind can make better decisions regarding food choices.
- Sleep deprivation causes an increase in the hormone ghrelin and a decrease in the hormone leptin. Ghrelin is responsible for making us feel hungry, whereas leptin is responsible for making us feel full.
- Sleep affects our basal metabolic rate through thermogenesis, meaning a sleep-deprived body burns fewer calories at rest.

A lack of adequate sleep can indeed have a negative effect on your weight loss program. If you struggle to get the recommended amount of sleep, consider these tips from the National Sleep Foundation.

TIP 1 **Stick to a sleep schedule of the same bedtime and wake-up time, even on the weekends.** This helps to regulate your body's clock and could help you fall asleep and stay asleep for the night.

TIP 2 **Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual.** A relaxing, routine activity right before bedtime conducted away from bright lights helps separate your sleep time from activities that can cause excitement, stress, or anxiety, which can make it more difficult to fall asleep, get sound and deep sleep, or remain asleep.

TIP 3 **If you have trouble sleeping, avoid naps, especially in the afternoon.** Power napping may help you get through the day, but if you find that you can't fall asleep at bedtime, eliminating even short catnaps may help.

TIP 4 **Exercise daily.** Vigorous exercise is best, but even light exercise is better than no activity. Exercise at any time of day, but not at the expense of your sleep.

TIP 5 **Evaluate your bedroom.** Design your sleep environment to establish the conditions you need for sleep. Your bedroom should be cool – between 60 and 67 degrees. Your bedroom should also be free from any noise that can disturb your sleep. Finally, your bedroom should be free from any light. Check your room for noises or other distractions. This includes a bed partner’s sleep disruptions such as snoring. Consider using blackout curtains, eyeshades, earplugs, “white noise” machines, humidifiers, fans, and other devices.

TIP 6 **Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillows.** Make sure your mattress is comfortable and supportive. The one you have been using for years may have exceeded its life expectancy – about 9 or 10 years for most good-quality mattresses. Have comfortable pillows and make the room attractive and inviting for sleep but also free of allergens that might affect you. Also ensure that the room is free of objects that might cause you to slip or fall if you have to get up during the night.

TIP 7 **Use bright light to help manage your circadian rhythms.** Avoid bright light in the evening and expose yourself to sunlight in the morning. This will keep your circadian rhythms in check.

TIP 8 **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and heavy meals in the evening.** Alcohol, and cigarettes, and caffeine can disrupt sleep. Eating big or spicy meals can cause discomfort from indigestion that can make it hard to sleep. If you can, avoid eating large meals for two to three hours before bedtime. Try a light snack 45 minutes before bed if you’re still hungry.

TIP 9 **Winddown.** Your body needs time to shift into sleep mode, so spend the last hour before bed doing a calming activity such as reading. For some people, using an electronic device such as a laptop can make it hard to fall asleep, because the particular type of light emitted from the screens of these devices activates the brain. If you have trouble sleeping, avoid electronics before bed or in the middle of the night.

TIP 10 **If you can't sleep, go into another room and do something relaxing until you feel tired.** It is best to take work materials, computers, and televisions out of the sleeping environment. Use your bed only for sleep and sex to strengthen the association between bed and sleep. If you associate a particular activity or item with anxiety about sleeping, omit it from your bedtime routine.

TIP 11 **Speak with your doctor or find a sleep professional if you're still having trouble sleeping.** You may also benefit from recording your sleep in a sleep diary to help you better evaluate common patterns or issues you may notice with your sleep or sleeping habits.