

Sleep, Caffeine & Your Well-Being

Yawn! Many of us are experiencing a sleep debt. According to the Centers for Disease Control, over one-quarter of the U.S. population report occasionally not getting enough sleep (approximately 8 hours per night) while nearly 10% experience chronic insomnia. Could one of them be you?

Overtired & Overwhelmed

Being overtired can cause:

- ✓ moodiness
- ✓ higher susceptibility to illness
- ✓ lack of energy
- ✓ stress
- ✓ anger
- ✓ motor vehicle and machinery-related accidents
- ✓ lack of concentration
- ✓ difficulty retaining new information



Caffeinated Concerns

It's tough to tell how much caffeine is in a cup of coffee. The way it's prepared, the type of bean used... all can impact the total caffeine content.

Caffeine is often found in many people's coffee mugs on a daily basis, as it's a stimulant that promotes alertness to get you through the long days and nights. However, that's no help when you're trying to get some good sleep! It can make it difficult for you to fall asleep plus it can reduce the amount of deep sleep that you get. Caffeine takes about 30 to 60 minutes to reach a peak level in your blood, according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), and the effects can last from 8 to 14 hours.

So, the AASM recommends that caffeine consumption be limited to no more than 300 to 400 mg. per day (about 3-4 cups of coffee). It's also a good idea to avoid caffeine in the late afternoon and evening if you want to get a good night's sleep. Now, wouldn't that be nice?

Lack of adequate sleep often causes your grades to drop—sometimes dramatically. And, yes, staying up late to study and then getting up early in the morning to do it again are counter-effective strategies!

What about the practice of sleep-deprived all-nighters? That creates a sleep debt that can be tough to overcome.

Often, students are unaware that their sleep deprivation can cause them serious problems—you may be so used to being consistently sleepy that you don't realize your lack of sleep is unhealthy or abnormal. Or you may just think it's "part of college life" because roommates, residence hall noise, late-night socializing, and more regularly interrupt your sleep. Help your peers see that this doesn't have to be the norm—good, quality sleep can go a long way in making all of you healthier, happier individuals.

Ways to Get Quality Sleep

The experts suggest a few simple tactics to help you increase the quality of your sleep:

- **Get on a schedule.** It is helpful to get to bed around the same time each night so your body gets used to a regular sleeping schedule.
- **Don't make your bed a key study space.** It comes highly recommended that activities like studying, reading, and any other type of work or stress-related activity NOT be done while in bed. This presents a problem for students who have only their beds and desk chairs in which to sit and complete their schoolwork. Use common areas (if they are quiet enough) and the library instead.

Caffeine Content

Check out the comprehensive table of how much caffeine is in various products, from soft drinks to medications to chocolate ice cream, at <http://sleepeducation.com/Topic.aspx?id=45>.