



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Sleep On It

National Sleep Awareness Week — March 7–13, 2011

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

If you find yourself fighting to stay awake during the day, you're not alone. A recent survey found that approximately one in three people in the U.S. reported getting insufficient sleep.

Dr. Anne Wheaton is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of getting enough sleep every day. Welcome to the show, Anne.

[Dr. Wheaton] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Anne, how much sleep does the average adult need?

[Dr. Wheaton] According to the National Sleep Foundation, most adults need seven to nine hours of sleep a night, and children and adolescents need even more than that.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the main causes of sleep problems?

[Dr. Wheaton] There are three main categories of things that contribute to sleep problems. The first is not allotting enough time for sleep in your schedule, and this could be due to work schedules, family responsibilities, or social activities. The second is bad sleep habits, such as engaging in stimulating activities before bed. Finally, there are sleep disorders and this includes sleep disordered breathing, or obstructive sleep apnea, which is breathing problems during sleep, insomnia, which is having trouble falling or staying asleep, and restless leg syndrome, which makes it difficult to fall asleep because you have feelings in your legs that are only solved by actually moving.

[Dr. Gaynes] Anne, what kinds of problems result from people not getting enough sleep?

[Dr. Wheaton] Problems can range from things, such as an impaired ability to concentrate or remember things. But, there are more serious outcomes, such as motor vehicle crashes which can result in injury or death, as well as chronic diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and depression.

[Dr. Gaynes] What can a person do to improve their chances of getting a good night's sleep?

[Dr. Wheaton] People need to establish a consistent sleep schedule – waking up at the same time every day and also going to bed at the same time every day, even on weekends. So you don't want to try to make up for lost sleep on the weekends. Next, you want to create a comfortable sleep environment that's dark, quiet, and cool, and sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillows. Before bed, avoid watching TV, using a computer, or reading in bed. Finish eating at least two or three hours before your regular bedtime. And exercise is good for a good sleep, but not if you exercise right before going to bed. You should avoid caffeine and alcohol close to bedtime and you should also give up smoking. Finally, you can create a relaxing bedtime routine, such as soaking in a hot bath or listening to soothing music in the hour before you go to sleep.

[Dr. Gaynes] At what point should a person get medical help for insufficient sleep?

[Dr. Wheaton] If you've been told by someone that you snore, there may be a sleep disorder breathing problem. And if your snoring is especially loud, for instance, someone in the next room can hear, even with the door closed, or if you've been told that you stop breathing or gasp for air during sleep, or if you feel especially sleepy during the day, especially after a full night's sleep, you may need to undergo an evaluation for sleep apnea. It's common to have a bad night's sleep once in a while, but if you consistently have trouble falling or staying asleep or if your sleep problems interfere with how you feel or function during the day, you should seek an evaluation by a physician, preferably one familiar with assessing and treating sleep disorders. Before visiting your doctor, you should keep a diary of your sleep habits, for about 10 days, to discuss at the visit. In your sleep diary, include when you go to bed, when you actually fall asleep, when you wake up and when you actually get out of bed, if you're taking naps, when you're exercising, when you're consuming alcohol or caffeinated beverages, and bring those with you to your visit.

[Dr. Gaynes] Anne, where can listeners get more information about overcoming sleep problems?

[Dr. Wheaton] You can go to CDC's sleep website at www.cdc.gov/sleep.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Anne. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Anne Wheaton about the importance getting plenty of sleep.

Remember, to improve your chances of getting a good night's sleep, maintain a regular sleep schedule. Create a comfortable sleep environment that's cool, dark, and quiet. Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and stimulating activities, such as exercise and computer use, before bedtime. If you're still not getting enough sleep, talk to your health care provider.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.