

Keeping your health and wellbeing in the know

MyHealthTALK

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Why Sleep Is Important to Our Health

Did you know that nearly all living things need sleep – even insects? While it isn't always the solemn slumber you imagine, most living creatures need some sort of recuperation period.

That's why sleep is so vital to health: it is a time for recovery and rejuvenation.

For us, sleep restores our body and function – and yes, naps count! Perhaps most importantly, our brain is recharged through a bout of sheep-counting.

Just last fall, researchers shared precisely how the human brain refreshes during sleep. As we slumber, a type of brain fluid, called cerebral spinal fluid, washes through every nook and cranny in our gray matter, clearing out the waste and toxins, much like a dishwasher.

What's even cooler is this process only works when you are asleep. While we dream of tropical beaches or puppies, our brain cells actually contract in size to allow this fluid to sweep through, rinsing away debris, which is a byproduct of busy cells working all day.

This study was the first of its kind to show some of the main functions of sleep and why so many living things do it. Even though we all need sleep, we certainly all don't rest the same.

Throughout our life, the amount of sleep we need varies as we age.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, newborns need 12 to 18 hours of sleep each day – no wonder they grow so fast!

By high school, the average teen should be snoozing between 8.5 and 9.5 hours every night. And healthy adults require seven to nine quality hours in dreamland.

Too bad we aren't grazing giraffes – they need less than two hours of sleep each day!

Sometimes it can be tricky to get a full night of sleep. Here are a few tips to help you spend quality time with your pillow:

Turn off your electronics prior to bedtime: The bright light from your tablet, laptop or even smartphone can throw off your body's normal circadian rhythms, or your natural sleep cycle. It's best to limit time on these devices before hitting the hay.

Dial down the temperature: Some researchers say the ideal temperature for the best night of sleep falls between 60 and 67 degrees Fahrenheit. Try adjusting your thermostat to see if you sleep better!

Exercise often: Making time for your daily workout won't just help you maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle, but it will also help you sleep well at night.

So next time you get cozy under the covers, you may not want to hit the snooze button on this health reminder.

"Sleep: The Ultimate Brainwasher?" Emily Underwood, news.sciencemag.org, Oct. 17, 2013.

"How Much Sleep Do We Really Need?" National Sleep Foundation, sleepfoundation.org, May 13, 2014.

"Nine Things You Should Know about America's Sleep Habits," Carolyn Gregoire, huffingtonpost.com, May 9, 2014.

"Your Guide to Never Feeling Tired Again," WebMD, webmd.com, May 13, 2014.

"Brain Basics: Understanding Sleep," National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, ninds.nih.gov, May 13, 2014.

Did You Know?

Think you know all there is to learn about sleep? Check out these fun facts about rest and relaxation:

- **One third:** If we are getting proper rest, we sleep for about a third of our lives!
- **1055.6 hours:** The estimated amount of sleep a new parent will lose the first year of their child's life.
- **11 days:** The length of time record-holder Randy Gardner spent without sleep in 1965.
- **Silence:** Even though we can dream in vivid color, researchers believe our dream reels are entirely silent.
- **Hypnic jerks:** The name given to the feeling of falling, which can happen as you doze off.
- **Half:** The amount of a dolphin's brain that is continuously awake!



"30 Crazy Things You Didn't Know About Sleep," Laura Stampler, healthland.time.com, April 21, 2014.





Experts Weigh in on Teens and SPORTS DRINKS

Have you ever zeroed in on the amount of sugar in a bottle of your favorite sports drink? Some range from 14 grams to more than 42 grams per 32-fluid-ounce bottle. So it may come as no surprise that consumption of these beverages has tripled among American teens in the last decade. Nearly 12 percent of America's youth drinks at least one sports drinks every day.

Recent research from the Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior highlights the negative effects these sugary drinks may be having on your teen.

The scientists found that teens who drink sports or energy drinks regularly were more likely to take up unhealthy habits. Some of these habits include smoking, spending more time watching TV and consuming more sugar-sweetened products like pop.

But there was a silver lining, as one article calls it. The study found that some of the young population drinking many sports drinks also turns out to be athletic teens.

This is not a huge shock, as many sports beverage companies partner with professional sports teams for marketing.

While it's good to see that those teens may be drinking large amounts of sports drinks because they are burning energy after school, researchers remind parents to help adolescents limit their sugary drink intake. Even if your teen is a year-round athlete, "water should instead be promoted as the best option for hydration following physical activity," said Nicole Larson, the lead author of the study.

"Sports Drinks and Energy Drinks Linked to Unhealthy Behaviors in Adolescents," Medical News Today, medicalnewstoday.com, May 6, 2014.

"Consuming Sports and Energy Drinks Linked with Negative Behaviors among Teens," Sarah Klein, huffingtonpost.com, May 8, 2014.

"Teens Don't Need Sports and Energy Drinks, Pediatricians Say," Alice Park, healthland.time.com, May 30, 2011.

Coca-Cola Plans to Drop Questionable Ingredient from Fruity Drinks

Last month, the household name Coca-Cola made headlines as it moves to eliminate a potentially toxic ingredient from its fruity products like Powerade, Fresca and some Fanta drinks.

A group of petition signatures in the past two years has urged Coca-Cola to remove brominated vegetable oil (BVO) from its citrus products.

BVO contains bromine, an element found in flame retardants, and is used to keep ingredients from separating.

A spokesperson acknowledged that BVO is legal under current regulations but that the company chose to follow suit with its competitors, to ensure safety of their beverages.

BVO was pulled from Pepsi's Gatorade products last year, but is still found in some Mountain Dew and Amp Energy beverages.

It is not concrete, but the ingredient will likely be replaced with sucrose acetate isobutyrate, already found in beverages, and glycerol ester of rosin, which is currently found in gum.

"Coca-Cola to Remove an Ingredient Questioned by Consumers," Stephanie Strom, nytimes.com, May 5, 2014.



The Best Gift for Dad

this Father's Day

Father's Day is Sunday, June 15! And what could be better than gifting vitality to your dad this year?

Is your dad up-to-date on his annual health screenings?

Here is a checklist compiled by the U.S. Preventive Task Force of the most important tests your dad can get each year to stay healthy:

- Blood pressure, cholesterol and BMI
- Diabetes screening/fasting blood sugar
- Skin check for oddly-shaped moles
- Vaccine updates (they're not just for kids!)
- Depending on age, a colonoscopy and a prostate exam

"Screening Tests for Men," womenshealth.gov, May 13, 2014.

"Helping Men Live Safer and Healthier Lives," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cdc.gov, May 13, 2014

