

Seven Myths You've Been Told About Sleep That Can Damage Your Health



Note: This report is not intended to diagnose or treat any disease.

There's nothing worse than the frustration of trying to get to sleep... and not being able to. A few years ago, I went night after night without getting enough good, deep, restful sleep. Pretty soon, not only was I frustrated at night, I was feeling miserable all day, as well! Low energy, grumpy, and forcing myself through the day. Being sleep deprived tends to pretty much ruin everything else.

It didn't take long before getting a good night's sleep was my number one goal.

It can be a tremendous relief to finally get better sleep. To resolve these problems, it's just as important to know what NOT to do as to know what TO do. It just gets even more frustrating to try things that don't work, or that cause other problems!

I'll just bet that you've been told one or more of these Seven Myths. I know I have. And these myths can even be dangerous, leading to behaviors that damage our health!

Dispelling these Seven Myths will give you a good start, on your road to a good night's sleep.

Myth #1: Sleeping Pills are Harmless

When I'm sleep-deprived, I'm just so tired that I really want an easy solution. What's easier than a pill? However....

According to a large-scale study*, prescription sleeping pills are associated with a four-fold increased risk of death. Yet about 10% of adults in the US take prescription sleep meds. Yikes!

Those who took more sleeping pills had a higher risk of death than those who took fewer. And those who took the most pills were also 35% more likely to be diagnosed with cancer.



Now, to give the other side of the story. There may be reasons that sleeping pills are worth the risk for some individuals. And sometimes studies are misleading. The findings of one study may be over-turned by a later study. It is quite likely that some of these deaths were caused by illnesses which also caused

sleeplessness. I recommend discussing your unique situation with your doctor before going off of any prescription.

At the same time, there are known side-effects of sleeping pills. Some of these side effects are known to be fatal for some people. Since the safety of sleeping pills is shaky, it may be worth exploring other options.



Over-the-counter (OTC) sleep medications are generally believed to be less risky when taken as directed. However, if you read the labels, you will see they are not risk-free. For some people, if they take enough to get to sleep, they are way beyond safe dosage levels. And many people find that after they have used OTC sleep aids for a while, they need more of them to get to sleep.

* [The sleeping pill study mentioned above was published in the British Medical Journal.]

Myth #2: Natural Sleep Remedies Carry No Risk

I personally feel safer taking natural remedies when they are effective. However, that doesn't mean there is no down-side. Valerian, for example, is a popular herb to help with sleep. It can cause side-effects like headaches, nausea—and even insomnia! Some people feel drowsy the next morning. Studies indicate it's generally safe for short-term use. However, we don't really know anything about long-term risks.



Kava-kava is quite popular to help with sleep. Unfortunately, for some people, it may cause liver damage and even death. Even short-term, moderate use has been associated with severe liver problems.

Melatonin is used to help for sleep, although usually people report only a mild effect from it. It is also considered safe for

short-term use (when used as directed). However, many people are using it long term, which may be risky.

Since melatonin is a hormone, it can interact with other hormones in the body. The hormone system is really complex,



and everything is interrelated. For this reason, melatonin isn't generally recommended for children or for pregnant or nursing women.

It can worsen conditions such as diabetes, depression, and seizure disorders. It can interfere with blood pressure medications. So it really isn't risk-free.

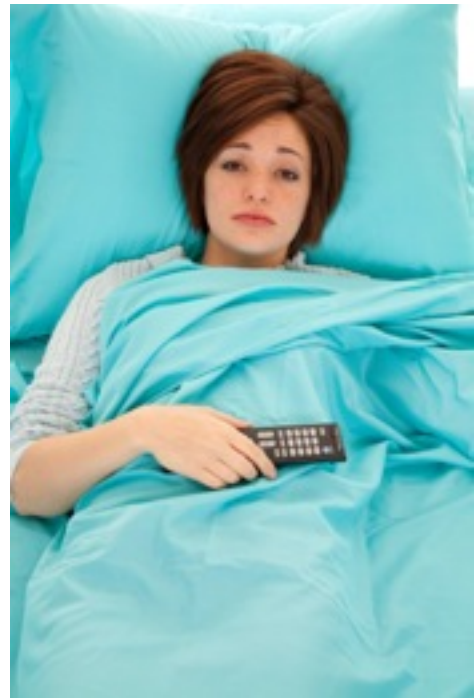
Bottom line: For short-term use, let's use something that works, that's as safe as possible, with input from a doctor. And let's seek an even better solution for the long term.

Myth #3: Watching TV At Bedtime Is Great To Calm The Mind And Fall Asleep

When we're exhausted and want to wind down, we tend to look for something mindless. If we just relax in bed and point that remote, we'll be sleepy in no time, right?

Unfortunately, this isn't such a good plan. The bright light from the TV stimulates the part of the brain that tells us it's daytime. So then our brain doesn't think it's time to go to sleep yet.

OK, then we'll do some work on the computer, or read an electronic book, right? Nope! This isn't a good idea either. The electronic screens act a lot like a TV screen as far as your brain is concerned.



Try reading (from a real book with pages) or listening to some calming music instead.

The National Sleep Foundation recommends turning off computers and other electronic devices at least an hour before bedtime.



They also recommend dimming other bright lights. Low-wattage incandescent bulbs are best for the bedside.

And for night, see how dark you can make your bedroom. It can even help to cover up small LED lights in the bedroom. This helps signal to your brain that it's time to get ready to snooze!

Myth #4: Energy Drinks Are A Great Way To Make Up For Poor Sleep

Struggling through the day on too little rest can make us pretty desperate for energy. If you've had serious sleep problems, you may have been willing to try almost anything for a boost. Then, right there on the grocery shelf is "Energy" in a bottle or can.

So, what are the ingredients in energy drinks? They pretty much all include stimulants, sweeteners, and flavoring.

Stimulants, such as caffeine or ginseng, override the body's natural signals that tell us we're sleepy. Caffeine blocks sleep-inducing chemicals in the brain. It stimulates adrenaline, which gives us energy.



However, keep in mind that if we're tired during the day, this means our body did not get the rest it needs. Covering this up with energy drinks may help us feel better, but it does not actually give our body what it really needs: rest!

Stimulants also tend to cause a temporary boost in energy, followed by a crash. So what do we do? Take more stimulants! This isn't such a good idea in the long run, however. The more we cover up our body's actual need for rest, the more depleted our body can become. And it takes six hours for half the caffeine to clear out of our system. So energy drinks consumed in the afternoon may keep us awake at night. So then we don't get enough rest at night, and guess what? We crave more stimulants the next day.

It's also worth noting that some people have died from a caffeine overdose. This is rare, but please do use caution with stimulants. Everyone is unique. What's safe for one person may not be safe for another.



Then there are the sweeteners. Some energy drinks are incredibly loaded up with sugars,

which have very serious known health risks. Too much sugar can cause weight gain. Weighing too much can increase risk of diabetes, heart disease, and other serious health problems! When you look at the labels, don't be fooled by the many names for types of sugars. The best place to look is under "Nutrition Facts" where it lists "Sugars".

Artificial sweeteners have been shown to cause problems as well. Several studies show they can cause glucose intolerance, which is a step towards diabetes. And a recent study published in Nature magazine shows artificial sweeteners can change the balance of microbes in our gut.

A more sensible way to boost our energy is to get appropriate exercise and eat a nutritious diet. And—of course—get a good night's sleep!



Myth #5: Counting Sheep Will Help



Ever tried counting sheep? I have. We've all heard that counting sheep will put you to sleep. But is it true?

Well, Oxford University's Department of Experimental

Psychology decided to find out. They found that counting sheep actually didn't work very well to get to sleep. Those who visualized a relaxing scene, like a beach or a walk in the woods, dropped off 20 minutes faster. The sheep counters did about the same as those who did nothing.

So it turns out sheep are great for wool and lamb chops, not so great for sleep!

If you count sheep and it works for you, keep it up! But if not... try something else.

Myth #6: Sleeping Eight Hours Straight Is Optimal

Are you worried that you aren't getting eight hours' sleep? Researchers disagree on what an optimal amount of sleep is. However, most agree it's different for different people. So if you're getting six hours' sleep, or nine hours' sleep, and feel fine, don't worry about it! There's no magic number.

In one study, those who slept seven hours did best. They had the best chance of still being alive at the end of six years. However, it probably would be a mistake for others to try to mimic them. It may be that people who are healthiest to begin with tend to need around seven hours of sleep.

Six to nine hours seems to work for most people.

Many sleep researchers say that our bodies will let us know how much sleep we need. If we're well-rested, we're getting enough.



If we get too little sleep for awhile, we accumulate a “sleep-debt”. Then we need to get extra sleep to pay off that debt. So the amount we need one night may be different from the amount we need another night.

Now, is it best to sleep straight through? Do you get stressed out if you wake up in the night and don’t get back to sleep for awhile?



This may surprise you, but there is evidence that it’s more natural to sleep for several hours, wake up for awhile, and then fall back to sleep for a few more hours. This is called “segmented sleep” or “bimodal sleep”. A segmented sleep pattern used to be more common before we had artificial lighting.

The important thing is to find a sleep schedule that really works for you, so you are getting enough sleep and feeling rested.

Myth #7: Some People Only Need A Few Hours Of Sleep

Don't you just envy people who say they do fine on a just few hours' sleep? Margaret Thatcher was famous for being able to function on just four hours' sleep during the week. People who sleep less than six hours a night are called "short sleepers".

Scientists have identified a rare genetic mutation that, apparently, allows a few individuals to get by with sleeping just a few hours.



However, in some circles, getting by on very little sleep has become a status symbol. Some people, who want to prove they have super-human powers, may be pushing themselves too hard. Their health may suffer.

Unfortunately, most people who think they don't need much sleep actually just lack in self-awareness. They aren't noticing how tired they are, and how much their reaction times have slowed. A study published in *Accident Analysis and Prevention* shows short sleepers have three times the risk of driving while drowsy. This is true *even if they think they've gotten enough sleep*.

So, for the most part, people who think they don't need 6-9 hours sleep really do need it.

(Note: One interesting exception to this rule might be advanced meditators. Some say deep meditation reduces the need for sleep.)



IMPORTANT BONUS MYTH

#8: Losing Sleep Is No Big Deal

Sleep problems are very common. In the US, 50-70 million Americans have some sort of sleep disorder. Yet most people don't tell their doctors about their sleeping problems. Most doctors don't routinely ask about sleep, either. So we are acting as if it isn't any big deal.



However, it really is a very big deal! Getting too little sleep is associated with a shorter life-span.

Sleep deprivation is associated with many health problems: cancer, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity, mood disorders, and injury from accidents. Plus there's poor quality of life.



This might be hard to believe, but it's true! Find out more in our free bonus report, *Live Longer! Seven Ways Getting A Good Night's Sleep Can Extend Your Life:*

www.DeepRestfulSleep.com/sleep-longevity

And tell a friend.

If you want to improve your sleep, it's important to stay motivated and focused on the goal, and this will help! No sign-up required.

To share, please send your associates to www.DeepRestfulSleep.com/sleep-myths instead of sending them the PDF. Thank you. More reports to come!
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