Sleep Well, Live Well

Chapter 1, Lesson 1: Sleep and Your Health

Welcome to the Health Advocate Sleep Well, Live Well Workshop!

In this six-week workshop, we will emphasize the importance of a good night's sleep, explain what exactly happens as you sleep and provide you with information to help you improve your sleep. We invite you to take what you learn and apply it to your sleep habits!

HealthAdvocate℠

What is sleep?

Sleep is part of your everyday routine, but have you ever stopped to consider what sleep is exactly? Sleep is defined as a temporary state in which your mind and body rest through reduced physical activity, physiological changes and variations in brain activity.

Why do we sleep?

There are many theories about why we sleep, but scientists have yet to agree upon on a solid reason. However, there is one general consensus: we sleep because we need it. Sufficient sleep is just as important to your health and well-being as healthy eating and exercise.

Without sufficient sleep you may experience:

- Poor concentration
- Difficulty retaining information
- Moodiness and irritability
- High stress levels
- Weight gain
- Inability to function
- Lower productivity
- Accident or injury

Poor sleep has been linked to chronic diseases such as:

- Hypertension
- Diabetes
- Depression
- Obesity
- Cancer

What does sleep do for the body?

Both the quality and quantity of sleep are important for physical, emotional and mental health. As you sleep, your body restores itself for the following day through tissue, cell and muscle repair; releasing important hormones; and recharging your brain.

Physical Health
Sleep improves your physical health by allowing your body to restore itself. While you are sleeping, your tissues, cells and muscles work to recover from the day. This is especially important for your heart and blood vessels. Hormones are also released during sleep to help your body function. These hormones control hunger, growth and repair, and glucose levels. Research indicates sleep may also improve immune system function and reduce inflammation.

**Mental and Emotional Health**
If you've ever had a sleepless night, you may be well aware of the toll insufficient sleep has on your mental health. Sleep helps maintain your cognitive skills and ability to function. When you get a good night's sleep, you are better at solving problems, coping with stress, controlling your emotions, retaining information and processing information. You are also less likely to experience mood swings, feelings of sadness and depression, or engage in impulsive or risky behavior.

Take Action!

Keep a **sleep journal** to learn more about your sleeping patterns! It can be helpful to write down the time you go to bed each night and the time you wake up.

If you find yourself waking up in the middle of the night and can identify a reason behind it, write that down, too, as well as how you feel when you wake up in the morning.

Take note if you feel rested, tired or exhausted. This can help you to identify any changes you may need to make to improve your sleep. **You can also track your sleep through your wellness website.**

Went to bed at 10:30 pm.

Woke up feeling well-rested!
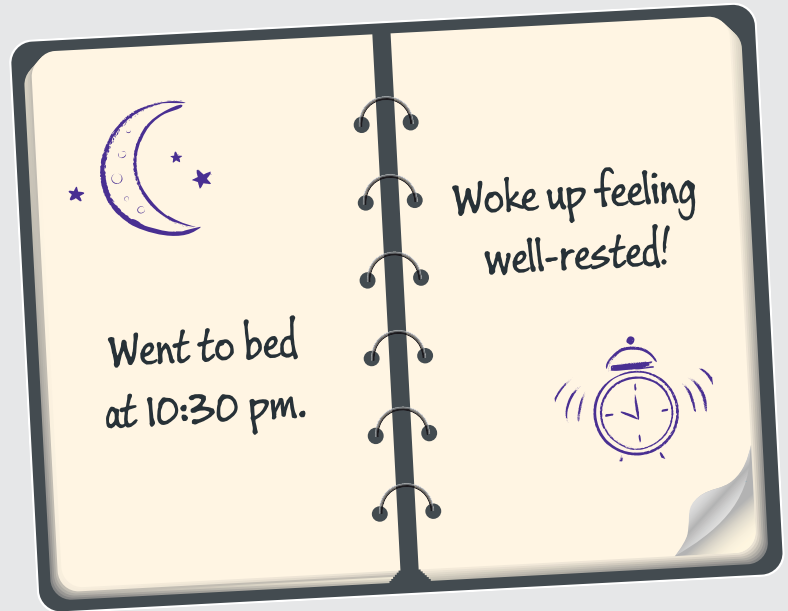
According to the **National Sleep Foundation**

45%

of Americans have experienced disruptions to their daily activities due to lack of sleep at least one day per week.

Next Steps

⭐ **Watch Lesson 2:** Why Sleep Matters

⭐ **Read Lesson 3:** How Much Sleep Do You Need?

⭐ **Take Chapter 1 Quiz**

Sources

1. www.healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/science/what/characteristics. *Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School: Healthy Sleep.*

2. www.cdc.gov/features/dssleep/. *Centers for Disease Control: Insufficient Sleep is a Public Health Problem.*

3. www.sleepfoundation.org. *National Sleep Foundation: Lack of Sleep is Affecting Americans, Finds the National Sleep Foundation.*

4. www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/sdd/why. *National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute: Why is Sleep Important?*