

# Your EAP|Here4TN!

*for you and your family*

**PARTNERS  
FOR HEALTH**  
EMPLOYEE  
ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM

## Good Sleep is Important for Good Health

March is National Sleep Awareness Month. This is a great time to remember that good sleep is important to your physical health, your mood, and your overall well-being.

Studies have shown how much of a negative impact lack of sleep can have on your daily life. While we sleep, our bodies secrete hormones that positively affect our mood, energy, memory, and concentration. So it's important to get an adequate amount of sleep each night in order to maintain our health.



While eight hours of sleep is typically the standard recommendation, the amount of sleep needed varies by individual. Some people do well with only seven hours of sleep, while others need nine or more hours. School-aged children and adolescents need at least nine hours of sleep a night. However, with puberty-driven changes in teens' biological clocks, they often go to bed later and lose valuable sleep.

Good quality sleep may help you:

**Reduce stress.** Without enough rest, the body functions on high alert. Increased blood pressure and the production of stress hormones can make it harder to fall asleep and recharge the next night.

**Be more alert and active during the day.** With enough rest, you'll have higher levels of energy and mental acuity for performing complex physical and mental tasks. Sleep helps repair cells damaged by stress, fatigue and muscle strain.

**Avoid depression.** Getting enough sleep helps regulate levels of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that affects our mood. Having low levels of serotonin can lead to depression and other behavioral health disorders.

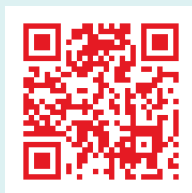
**Better control your weight.** Lack of sleep adversely affects levels of hormones that regulate our appetite. This can contribute to being overweight or obese.

**Have a healthier heart.** Blood pressure and cholesterol levels are higher when you're sleep-deprived, and these are risk factors for heart disease and stroke.

National Sleep Awareness Month helps recognize the potential impact of getting too little sleep. In fact, sleep problems are quite common. An estimated 50 to 70 million Americans suffer with some type of sleep disorder or occasional sleeping problem each year.

If lack of sleep is regularly impacting your daily life, you should see your family doctor or a sleep disorders specialist. There are also a number of simple techniques you can try at home that can help you get a better night's sleep. (See the article on page 2 about stress and sleep.)

Your ParTNers EAP offers information and resources that can help with sleep issues. Call toll-free **1.855.Here4TN** (1.855.437.3486) 24 hours a day, seven days a week for no-cost, confidential help from a counseling professional. You can also find extensive information on the **www.HERE4TN.com** website.



# The Link Between Stress and Sleep

Join us for a webinar on stress management on April 9 from 1 – 2 p.m. central time. Register today by [clicking here](#) or go to [www.Here4TN.com](http://www.Here4TN.com) to register. Space is limited!

Stress causes changes in the body. When faced with a threatening or upsetting situation, your body's stress response can be triggered. This "fight or flight" response results in breathing changes, muscle tension, and the release of chemicals such as adrenaline that provide bursts of energy to escape real or perceived threats.

However, if you don't manage to release this stress through relaxation or physical activity, it can build up and leave you in a state of chronic stress. This is very hard on the body, and it can make it harder to get a good night's sleep.

Here are some tips on cutting stress in order to get better sleep:

- **Figure out what is causing you stress.** Are you struggling with workload, relationships or financial difficulties? If you stop and analyze what is most stressful in your life, you can start to develop a plan to manage it better.
- **Work out your stress with exercise.** A workout, run, ride or walk can definitely cut your stress. If you have a regular exercise routine, don't do it too close to bedtime. Before and after the workday (and possibly at lunch) is best.
- **Share the load.** Share your concerns and stressors with trusted friends and family members. Some constructive "venting" can help you release stress.
- **Be smart with beverages.** Avoid caffeine and alcohol before bedtime. However, consuming caffeine in moderation with breakfast or lunch can improve your daytime alertness.
- **Eat light in the evening.** Eat light snacks to promote sleep; heavy meals can disturb sleep.
- **Keep your bedtime environment peaceful.** Keep light and noise to a minimum. Don't use the bedroom to watch television, answer text messages or to check and send emails.
- **Use familiar bedtime routines.** Do the same things each night to tell your body that it's time to wind down. Try a relaxing pre-sleep ritual such as a warm bath, soft music, or reading.
- **Try, try again.** If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, do a quiet activity somewhere else and return to bed when you're sleepy.

Regardless of the technique(s) you employ, try to make sure that getting good sleep is a priority in your life. With better sleep, you'll be able to better handle life's challenges.

## Lack of Sleep Affects Your Mood

It's no secret that when you don't get enough sleep at night, your emotions can be negatively affected. Everything can seem harder when you're not well rested. Here are some facts about sleep and emotions.

- Being deprived of sleep results in decreases in positive mood and increases in negative mood. Thus if you're sleep deprived, you are more likely to be irritable, angry, sad or stressed.
- Excessive lack of sleep can hurt your social relationships and work performance. You're also more prone to having accidents, injuries and sick days.
- If you're sleep deprived, you're more likely to have a negative reaction to what's happening in your life. You may feel more overwhelmed with challenges than usual.
- Sleep and mood influence each other. Insomnia can be a symptom of depression; at the same time, depression can make insomnia worse.
- If you routinely lack sleep, you're at a higher risk of developing emotional problems such as anxiety and depression.
- If sleep problems persist, it's important to take them seriously and get help. Consult with your medical provider. Ask to be evaluated for sleep problems.

## Did You Know?

Here are some interesting facts about the importance of quality sleep.

**The numbers aren't so good.** It turns out that adults sleep 6.6 hours per night on average. Nearly half of all adults report having trouble falling asleep, and more than half wake up feeling unrested.



**Lack of sleep makes it harder to learn.** Sleep-deprived people have lack attention, alertness, concentration, reasoning, and problem solving.

### The most common sleep disorders:

- *Insomnia*: This is the prolonged inability to fall asleep or stay asleep.
- *Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)*: People with OSA experience repeated interruptions in sleep when their throat closes and they struggle to breathe.
- *Narcolepsy*: This disorder is the opposite of insomnia. People with narcolepsy have trouble staying awake. They may fall asleep at any time or place during the day.

**More rest means more safety.** Testing has shown that with a driving simulator or a hand-eye coordination task, sleep-deprived people perform just as badly as intoxicated people.

**Rest helps boost memory.** Deep sleep helps us “consolidate” memories, making connections between events, feelings and experiences. This helps us retrieve our memories in the future.

## Tips for Getting Better Sleep

If you're having trouble with sleep, try these techniques.

- Strive to block out seven to nine hours per night of uninterrupted sleep.
- Keep a regular sleep-wake cycle. Try to wake and rise close to the same time every day, including weekends.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine in the four to six hours before bedtime.
- Don't eat large meals within two hours of bedtime.
- Don't exercise within two hours of bedtime; exercising earlier can help you sleep more soundly.
- Do not use your bedroom for anything other than sleep. Don't problem-solve, watch TV, pay bills, check social media or text.
- Avoid napping during the day.
- If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, do a quiet activity somewhere else and return to bed when you're sleepy.

