

The Importance of Sleep in College

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Student Wellness Series

Facts



- ❑ College students are sleeping less and less!
- ❑ Most college students get < 6 hours of sleep per night- Why?

Overload of activities

Social lives

Work-life-school balance

- ❑ Research indicates that insufficient sleep impacts our health, our moods, our GPA and our safety

Sleep matters!

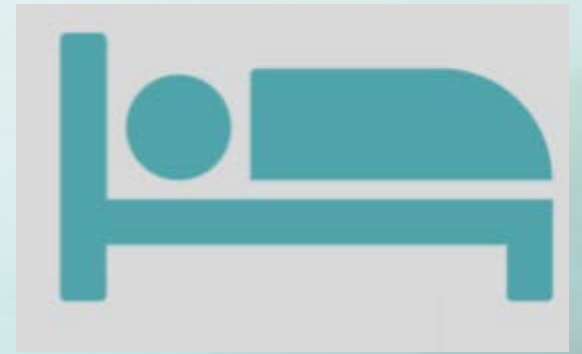
Why is sleep so important?

- ❑ Restores our energy
- ❑ Fights off illness and fatigue
- ❑ Strengthens our immune system
- ❑ Helps us think more clearly and creatively
- ❑ Strengthens memory and produces a more positive mood



Sleep is an active and dynamic process vital for normal motor and cognitive function

How much sleep do we need?



- ☐ 6-10 hours of sleep per night
- ☐ Highly individualized- different people need different amount of sleep to feel rested

Ask yourself?

Are you frequently tired or irritable during the day?

Are you sleeping 2+ hours per night on weekends?

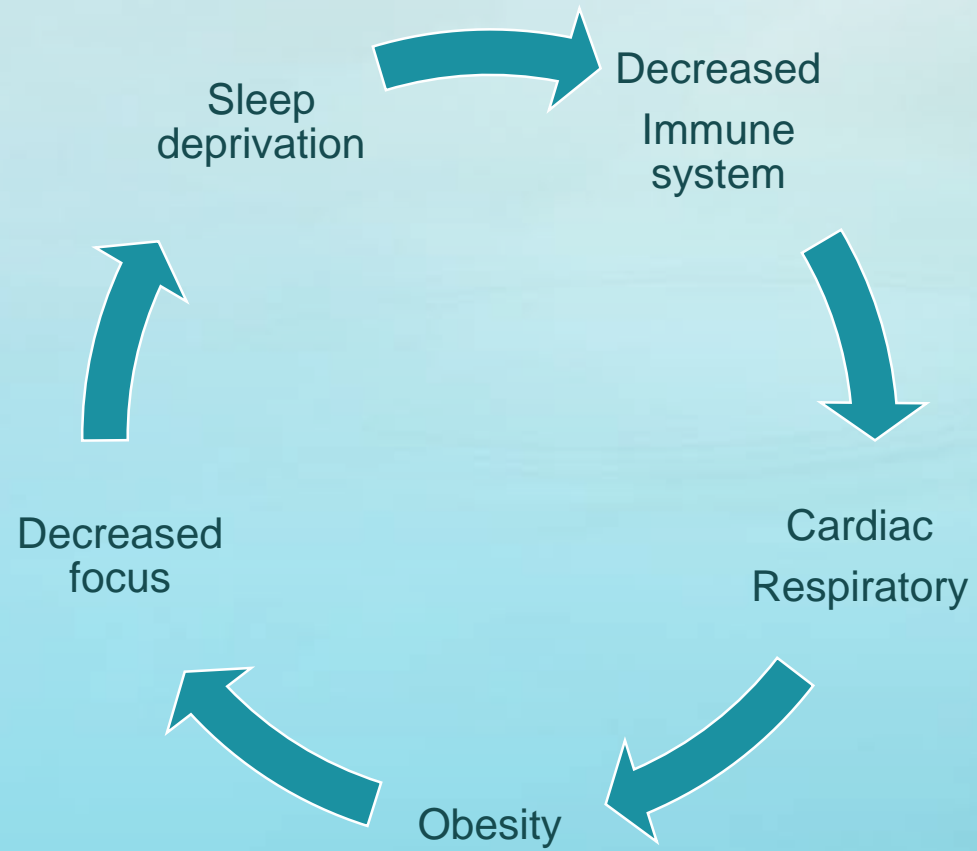
Do you have the urge to nap during the day?

Consequences of sleep loss: physical & mental



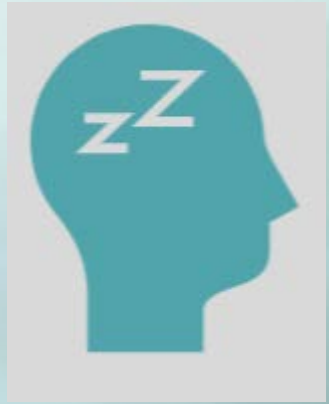
- ☐ More illness, such as colds and flu, due to a lowered immune system
- ☐ Feeling more stressed out
- ☐ Increased weight gain and obesity
- ☐ Lower GPA and decreased academic performance
- ☐ Increased mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety
- ☐ Increased automobile accidents due to fatigue caused by “drowsy driving”
- ☐ Decreased performance in athletics and other activities that require coordination

Physical issues



Mental issues

- ☐ Linked to depression and anxiety
- ☐ Too much sleep (often sleeping 10 hours or more a night or “escape sleeping”)
- ☐ Regularly feeling fatigue, constantly wishing you were sleeping or napping
- ☐ Engaging in day to day responsibilities feels highly tiring or burdening



Seek help! Find a mental health counselor!

Sleep and academic performance

❑ 1 in 4 students indicate that lack of sleep has impacted their academic performance in a negative way

- Lower grades

- Missed a paper or project deadline

- Withdraw from class

- Up all night studying

- Cramming at the last minute

How sleep helps learning and memory

- ❑ During sleep, the brain organizes, sorts, and stores what we have learned and experienced that day, making it easier to recall at a later time
- ❑ Sleep also helps you weed out irrelevant information and helps you make connections between your memory and information you learned that day
- ❑ If you study a little every day, you can use this natural process of sleep to gain a better understanding of the material and to retain the information more efficiently
- ❑ If you don't understand something you have read or you can't solve a problem, look it over and then sleep on it.

Increase the likelihood of learning and retaining information, get at least 6-8 hours of sleep before your exam. Go for 8!

Establishing a sleep ritual

- ☐ A routine that helps the mind and body wind down at the end of the day in preparation for a good night's sleep
- ☐ Maintain a regular bed and wake time schedule including weekends.
- ☐ Establish a regular, relaxing bedtime routine such as soaking in a hot bath or hot tub and then reading a book or listening to soothing music.
- ☐ Create a sleep-conducive environment that is dark, quiet, comfortable, and cool.
- ☐ Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillows.
- ☐ Use your bedroom only for sleep and sex.
- ☐ Finish eating at least 2-3 hours before your regular bedtime.
- ☐ Exercise regularly. It is best to complete your workout at least 2 hours before bedtime, as exercising before you sleep can leave your body too energized to relax.
- ☐ Avoid caffeine (e.g. coffee, tea, soft drinks, energy drinks, chocolate) 3-4 hours before bedtime. It can keep you awake.
- ☐ Avoid nicotine (e.g. cigarettes, tobacco products). Used close to bedtime, it can lead to poor sleep.
- ☐ Avoid alcohol close to bedtime.

Using a sleep diary

- ❑ Help you evaluate your sleep over time
- ❑ Typical things kept in a sleep diary include levels of sleepiness at different times during the day, times you sleep well, times you have difficulty staying awake, and recording the amount of sleep you get each night.

Sleep Diary

Levels of Sleepiness Table
In the table below, rate your level of sleepiness using the following scale:

0 = Wide Awake 1 = Awake 2 = Drowsy 3 = Sleepy 4 = Falling Asleep

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Morning 6am-12pm							
Afternoon 12pm-6pm							
Evening 6pm-12am							
Night 12am-6am							

Difficulty Staying Awake Table
In the table below, rate your difficulty staying awake using the following scale:

0 = Not at all 1 = Occasional 2 = Sometimes 3 = Most of the Time 4 = All the Time

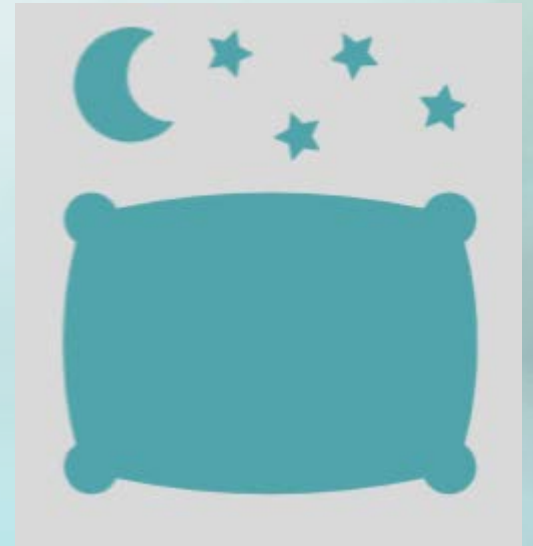
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
I fought off/ignored a need to sleep							
I dozed off/ignored a need to sleep							
I need caffeine or stimulant to stay awake							

In the table below, record the total amount of sleep you are getting:

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Hours/Minutes Sleeping							
Hours/Minutes Napping							
Total							

Key points!

- If you nap, keep it to about 20-30 minutes.
- **You Can't Fake Wake!** Do not drive drowsy
- Alcohol significantly affects your sleep



- Find us online: El Camino College Student Health Services

<https://www.elcamino.edu/student/studentservices/health/>