

SPECIAL 40TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

Canadian Living

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ANNIVERSARY

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TV'S MARILYN DENIS IS OUR GUEST EDITOR

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vitality integrative medicine
Treating the person, not just the disease..



Sleep Like You Mean It

Struggling to get your snooze on?
Check out our guide for getting the rest
you need, when and how you need it.

Find your sleep sweet spot

You've heard you need a solid eight hours of shut-eye every night, but you swear you're good with six. Your spouse, meanwhile, is grumpy without a generous nine hours. So how much sleep do you really need?

Read on to find out.

BY LISA MESBUR



Yet again, you spent the night tossing and turning, and now you face the day feeling tired and cranky. What's going on inside your body isn't great, either, explains Tara Maltman-Just, pharmacist and executive clinician at Vitality Integrative Medicine in Winnipeg.

"Your sleep-wake cycle affects a lot more than just your energy throughout the day," she says. "It affects your immune function, your blood sugar. In fact, too much sleep or too little sleep can decrease life expectancy." We've all heard that adults need seven to eight hours of sleep each night, but that's an average—some of us need more, while others are fine with less. How can you find your perfect number on the sleep spectrum?

ADD MORE HOURS

The first clue may be how you talk about it. "When people say they can 'get away with' a certain number of hours of sleep, they're admitting they're not getting enough," says Dr. Charles Samuels, founder and medical director at the Centre for Sleep and Human Performance in Calgary. "It means they know how much sleep they need to feel well rested on a daily basis, but they're not getting it."

Another sign: feeling bad-tempered or foggy-brained. Patience and clear thinking are often the first things to go in sleep-deprived individuals. "People become more irritable and inattentive," says Dr. Samuels. "The less rested you are, the less creative your thinking can be."

And if you've got the urge to eat, you might need a siesta, not snacks. "As we shorten the sleep we need, it increases the appetite for calorie-dense foods," explains Dr. Samuels. "It contributes to the onset of weight gain and poor weight control."

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

On the flip side, if you regularly spend the bulk of your free time snoozing, you might be sleeping more than you should. Oversleeping can be an indication of a host of other health problems—hypothyroidism and mood conditions such as depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia—all of which require treatment.

Of course, there are times when additional sleep is necessary—like when your body is recovering from illness or surgery. "In those cases, it makes sense to have more sleep," says Maltman-Just, "to allow the body to rest and heal." Bottom line? If you constantly feel the need to oversleep

but aren't sure why, talk to your doctor to address any underlying issues.

The trick is to find your own happy medium—the number of hours of sleep needed to wake up rested and refreshed. If a restful vacation helped you realize you need eight hours of shut-eye per night and you're only clocking five, try these simple strategies to increase your total number of hours of zzz's.

• Keep a sleep diary

Recording your sleeping and waking times in a diary—as well as your meals, exercise habits and caffeine and alcohol intake—is a helpful tool for improving sleep quality, according to Dr. Harvey Moldofsky, director of research at the Centre for Sleep and Chronobiology and president of the Toronto Psychiatric Research Foundation. The logic: A diary can provide clues as to why you might be undersleeping and, by extension, potential lifestyle changes to promote better sleep.

• Think weekly—not daily—totals

If you're not getting your ideal number of hours of sleep every night, don't fret. "We always go on total number of hours of sleep per week," says Dr. Samuels. "People need 50 to 60 hours of sleep per week; try to get close to that." His suggestion: Keep your weekly sleep debt down with strategic naps, sleep-ins of up to one hour and consistent bedtimes throughout the week.

SLEEP STAT

ROUTINELY FALLING ASLEEP IN LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES MEANS YOU'RE SLEEP-DEPRIVED—IT SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 10 TO 15 MINUTES TO DRIFT OFF.

• Aim to sleep later

Although you might be tempted to go to bed earlier to gain extra hours of slumber, you'll be better served by adding time to the end of your nightly sleep cycle whenever possible. "The way the brain likes to sleep is going forward," notes Dr. Samuels. "So maintain your bedtime—maybe turn in half an hour earlier—and then add to the other end, up to an extra hour." If your work schedule prevents sleeping in, try to get an extra hour of sleep on Saturdays and Sundays. If your sleep is so poor that you routinely get less than 50 to 60 hours a week, see your doctor. ☐

Cultivate good sleep habits

Go about your day with your night in mind and kick these unhealthy sleep habits out of bed for good.

NIGHTTIME EXERCISE

While daily physical activity is great, you'll sleep much better if you finish your workout at least three hours before your bedtime to allow the stimulating effects of exercise to dissipate.

LATE-NIGHT MEALS

Nix late-night meals, which may interfere with your ability to sleep soundly, and give your body a rest from digestion. Try to finish supper at least three hours before you turn in for the night, and keep any bedtime snacks on the light side.

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

"Alcohol first induces sleep because it's a sedating compound," says Dr. Charles Samuels of Calgary's Centre for Sleep and Human Performance, "but then it disrupts sleep because the alcohol leaves the system very quickly." He adds that the depressant also suppresses REM, or dream, sleep, which the body needs to repair itself. If you have a drink with dinner, however, it will likely clear your system by bedtime, so it shouldn't affect your sleep cycle.

SCREEN TIME

Staring at your computer, tablet or smartphone until lights-out can curtail your ability to doze off (interestingly, watching TV is fine, as long as it's not done in bed). The light from these devices suppresses the release of sleep-inducing melatonin from our brains, and the stimulation from games, emails and social media keeps our brains active. For best sleep, turn off devices three hours before bedtime and keep all screens out of the bedroom. — LM

EASY DOZE IT

They might not all be scientifically proven, but some people swear by these methods of falling asleep. Why not give 'em a shot? (You can thank us in the morning.)

BY LISA MESBUR

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Herbs such as chamomile and lavender have been used as sleep aids for centuries. Be sure to check with a trained health-care practitioner to find out which herbs will work best for you.



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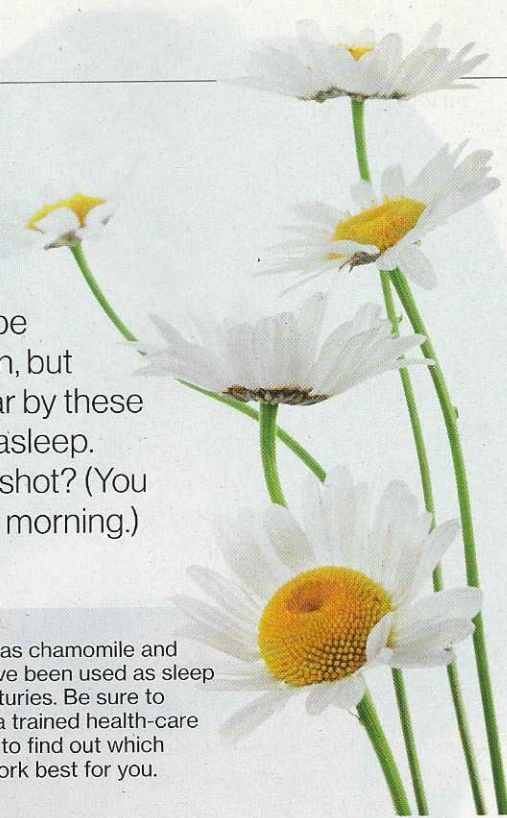
A small snack before bed of steel-cut oats, turkey, pumpkin seeds, bananas, milk, tart cherry juice or barley is thought by some to promote sleep.

4



5

Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, room-temperature yoga, meditation and creative visualization help calm the mind and prepare it for rest.



PHOTOGRAPHY (STOCKPHOTO) (ELOWERS); SHUTTERSTOCK (OATS, TOWELS); THINKSTOCK (SLEEP MASK, YOGA MAT); ILLUSTRATIONS, SHUTTERSTOCK



SLEEP STAT

IN MEN'S DREAMS, ABOUT 70 PERCENT OF THE CHARACTERS ARE MEN; WOMEN'S DREAMS ARE POPULATED EQUALLY BY BOTH GENDERS.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT FOODS

Why does that doughnut look so very good when you're so very tired? "Sleep restriction has been clearly shown to increase appetite for calorie-dense foods," says Dr. Charles Samuels, founder and medical director at the Centre for Sleep and Human Performance in Calgary. Tara Maltman-Just, pharmacist and executive clinician at Vitality Integrative Medicine in Winnipeg, agrees. "After a night or two of sleep deprivation, we tend to go for things that will give us that instant energy surge: sugar, energy drinks, coffee, even carbohydrates," she says. "However, we'd be best served over the course of the day by making sure we're balancing each meal or snack with protein and a healthy fat."

If you're struggling to keep your eyes open, enjoy eggs with veggies for breakfast or a salad with nuts and avocado for lunch. That way, says Maltman-Just, "you give your body continuous good-quality energy that will release gradually."

GET TO KNOW JOE

As caffeine-crazy Canadians, many of us can't get by without our morning (and afternoon) cups of joe. But consuming too much caffeine makes it less effective—even when we need it most, like after a long night spent tossing and turning.

To keep your brew working for you, reduce your daily caffeine consumption to one or two cups of coffee in the morning, says Dr. Samuels. "Then, interject caffeine where required," he says. "For instance, if you're sleep-deprived and need to be awake for a meeting that afternoon, that's the time you would use caffeine."

NAB A NAP

Add some force to that caffeine kick by adding a 15- to 20-minute nap after you've downed a cup. "A nap is far more effective than caffeine, and a nap plus caffeine is most effective," explains Dr. Samuels. Because caffeine's alertness-boosting effect takes 30 to 60 minutes to peak, drinking a cup of coffee before snoozing will provide the benefits of a rejuvenating short stretch of sleep as well as a natural limit to the nap. ◻

Bouncing back from a bad sleep

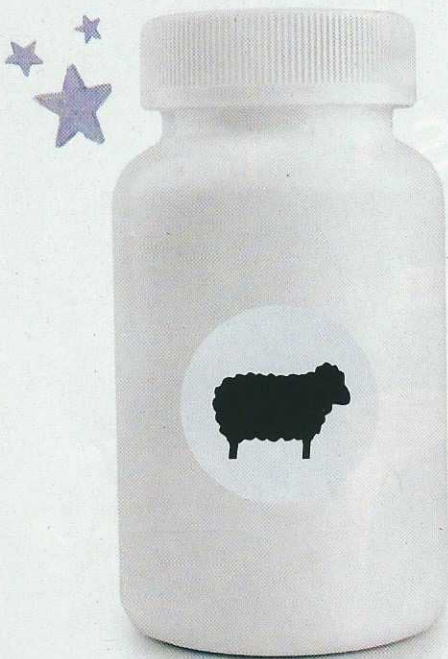
Whether brought on by sick kids or the stress of a looming deadline, restless nights happen. Fortunately, it's possible to eat, drink and rest your way back from a rough night. Here's how.

BY LISA MESBUR

A Dose of Rest

When you're bone-tired and searching for quick relief, over-the-counter sleep aids might seem like a great idea, but experts caution to consume them with care. Here's how to safely navigate the drugstore aisle.

BY LISA MESBUR



GET EXPERT ADVICE

Regardless of which OTC sleep aid you're considering, consult with a health-care practitioner. "Most people self-medicate," says Dr. Harvey Moldofsky, director of research at the Centre for Sleep and Chronobiology and president of the Toronto Psychiatric Research Foundation. "They go to the pharmacy and see all kinds of sleep aids, but they don't know that some of them can create problems."

In fact, numerous OTC sleep aids can have side-effects, including interactions with other medications. "Melatonin can interact with antidepressants," says Tara Maltman-Just, pharmacist and executive clinician at Vitality Integrative Medicine in Winnipeg. "Another common sleep aid contains an antihistamine that causes drowsiness; it should be avoided by people with narrow-angle glaucoma."

Even traditional sleep-promoting herbal remedies may have side-effects. "Calming herbals such as passionflower, lemon balm and valerian may be of benefit," says Maltman-Just, "but you should talk with a trained health-care professional to find what's best for you."

USE THEM SPARINGLY

No matter the OTC sleep aid you choose, they're not intended for long-term or frequent use. If you consistently pop a pill to get some shut-eye, you may find that your usual dosage is no longer as effective as it once was—or that you can't get to sleep without it. "If you have to use OTC sleep aids for more than one or two weeks, it's time to look deeper," says Maltman-Just.

Dr. Moldofsky agrees: "Sleep aids have both immediate positive effects and negative effects. If you're getting into a habit, they're causing you harm."

TREAT THE CAUSE

If you're regularly using an OTC sleep aid, you're treating a symptom of an underlying health issue, not the cause—and it's crucial to get help. "Sleep disturbance can be a sign of depression or anxiety, sleep apnea and hormonal imbalance in PMS, menopause and andropause," notes Maltman-Just. ▾

JAGGED LITTLE PILL

Worried about taking a prescription sleep aid? Find out when to rest easy and when to be wary. BY LISA MESBUR

DON'T WORRY

If you don't like the idea of taking sleep aids, remember that if your doctor has prescribed one, there's generally a good reason. Most doctors follow established guidelines for prescribing sleep aids, and they're aware of best practices for treating sleep disorders. "We don't ever recommend the indiscriminate use of medication for sleep problems," confirms

Dr. Charles Samuels, founder and medical director at the Centre for Sleep and Human Performance in Calgary. "Short-term use of a sedative/hypnotic is what's recommended, in combination with a behavioural management program. We define short-term use as 10 to 14 days and, after that, intermittent use as one to two days a week."

BE CAUTIOUS

If your doctor isn't monitoring your sleep-aid use closely, or

if your dosage is increasing, it's time to seek out a sleep specialist. According to Dr. Samuels, family physicians might not always have the expertise to know when long-term use has become dependence or when a patient requires more detailed care. Another red flag: not receiving treatment for the health issues behind the sleep disturbance. "There are good sleep aids, but they're for short-term use," says Dr. Harvey Moldofsky, director of research at the

Centre for Sleep and Chronobiology and president of the Toronto Psychiatric Research Foundation. "If you're developing dependence, then you're not dealing with whatever is causing the problem." Examples of underlying conditions that may affect the quality and number of hours of sleep include sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome and unresolved emotional problems, such as anxiety or a major depressive disorder.

SLEEP STAT

IT'S DIFFICULT TO READ OR TELL TIME IN YOUR DREAMS.