



THE IMPORTANCE OF **SLEEP**



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Understanding SLEEP

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Sleep is a naturally recurring state characterized by reduced or absent consciousness, and the inactivity of nearly all voluntary muscles.



Sleep timing is controlled by the circadian clock, and in humans, to some extent by willed behavior.



Sleep is restorative, and without it we are not able to work, learn, create and communicate at our highest level. With time, lack of sleep can lead to mental and physical breakdown.



Sleep has also been shown to be linked to the immune system. Sleep loss can impair our immune function.



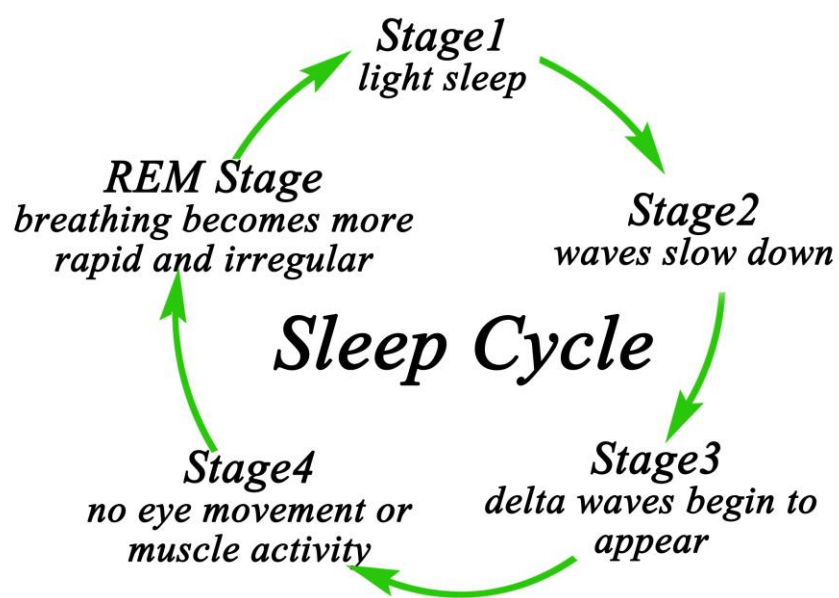
When we sleep, our metabolic rates reduce and free radical production is decreased, allowing restorative processes to take over.



Sleep supports higher-level cognition functions such as decision-making, reasoning and memory.



THE SLEEP CYCLE



What happens in your body during each phase of sleep:

Stage One: Within minutes of nodding off, your brain produces alpha and theta waves and your eye movements slow down. This introduction to sleep is relatively brief, lasting up to seven minutes. Here, you are in light stage sleep.

Stage Two: During this stage, the brain produces sudden increases in brain wave frequency known as sleep spindles. Then brain waves slow down.

Stages Three & Four: This stage is the beginning of deep sleep, as the brain begins producing slower delta waves. You won't experience any eye movement or muscle activity. At this point, it becomes a little harder for you to be awakened, because your body becomes less responsive to outside stimuli. The brain produces even more delta waves and you move into an even deeper, more restorative stage of sleep next. This is when the body repairs muscles and tissues, stimulates growth and development, boosts immune function, and builds up energy for the next day.

Rapid Eye Movement (REM) Sleep: You generally enter REM sleep about 90 minutes after initially falling asleep, and each REM stage can last up to an hour. An average adult has five to six REM cycles each night. During this final phase of sleep, your brain becomes more active. This is when most dreaming occurs, your eyes jerk quickly in different directions (hence, the name!), heart rate and blood pressure increase, and breathing becomes fast, irregular, and shallow. REM sleep plays an important role in learning and memory function since this is when your brain consolidates and processes information from the day before so that it can be stored in your long-term memory.

EFFECTS OF SLEEP DEPRIVATION

Everyone experiences trouble sleeping from time to time, but problems may occur when regular disturbances happen frequently and these can begin to affect your daily life.



Fatigue & lethargy



Foggy mind



Reduced creativity and problem-solving skills



Concentration and memory problems



Difficulty making decisions



Reduced immunity



Frequent colds and infections



Increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, & other health problems



Lack of motivation



Inability to cope with stress



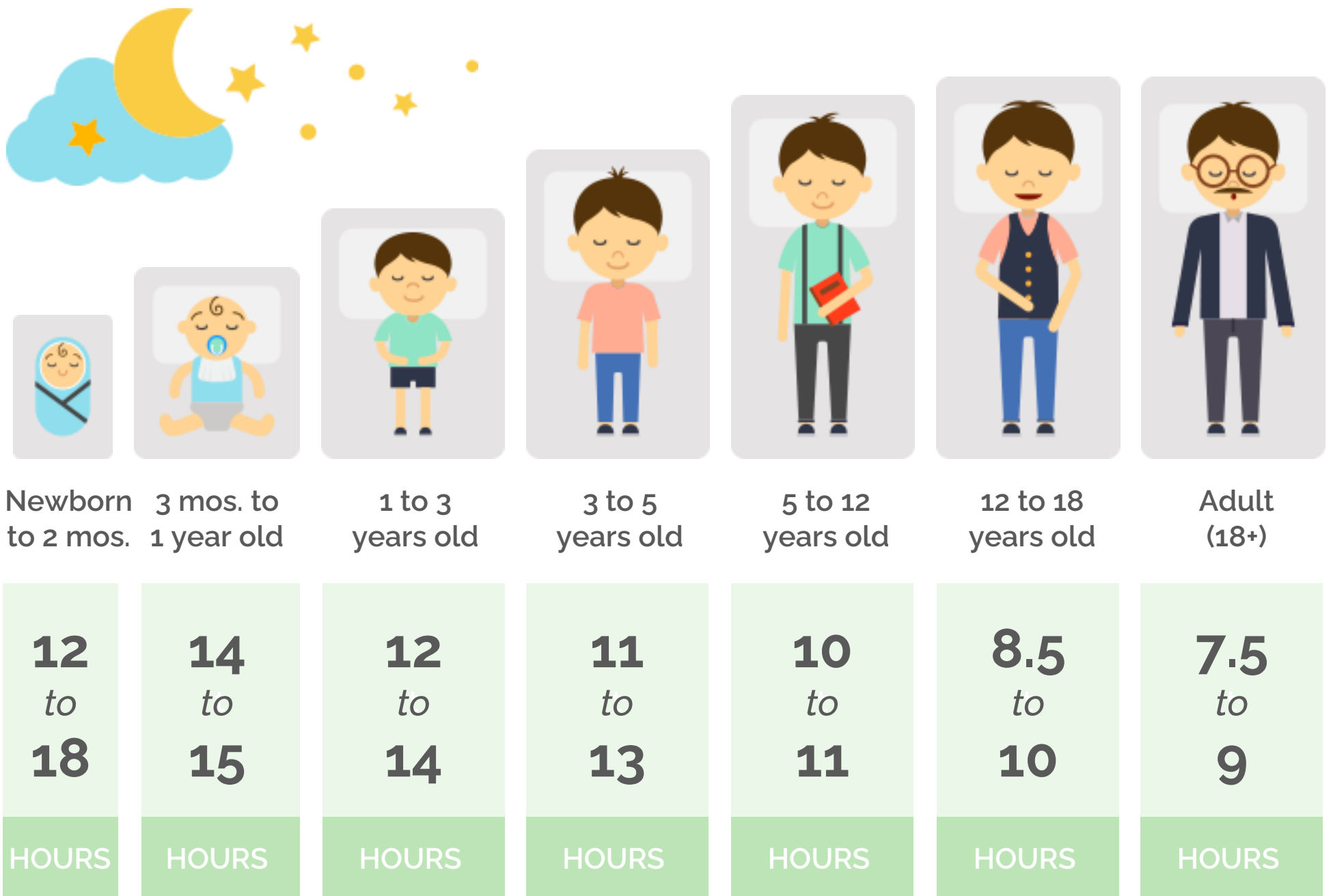
Moodiness and irritability



Impaired motor skills & increased risk of accidents

HOW MUCH SLEEP DO WE NEED

There is no protocol to how many hours of sleep we should get, the best way to evaluate it is to monitor how we feel throughout the day. If energy is low, memory is poor and we don't feel alert, then chances are we need more sleep.



HOW TO SLEEP BETTER

Improve your sleeping habits with these sleep promoting techniques and considerations that can be easily integrated into your evening routine.

1

IMPROVE NUTRITION AND EXERCISE HABITS

Good nutrition habits can drastically improve sleep quality, particularly in the last hours before bed. Consider the following:



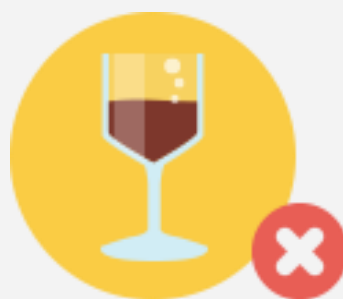
Avoid eating large meals before bed



Avoid drinking too much liquid



Avoid caffeine in the latter part of the day



Avoid alcohol before bed



Exercise daily

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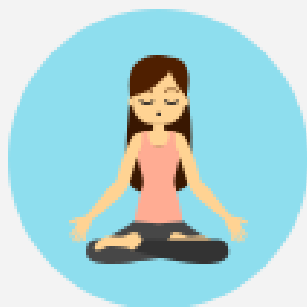
2

REDUCE STRESS & RELAX

Managing stressors and using pre-bed relaxation techniques can be effective in aiding a better nights sleep. Try these techniques:



Write down any problems or issues on paper



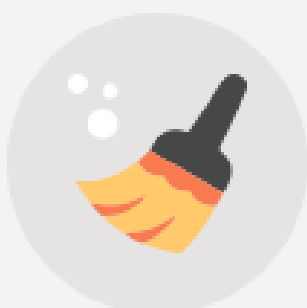
Conduct some deep breathing techniques



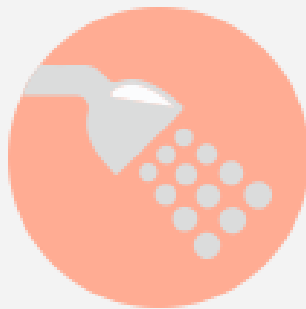
Use meditation and relaxation techniques



Avoid any stressing tasks or thoughts before bed



Keep the bedroom clean and tidy



Have a hot shower or bath



Do something you enjoy before bed

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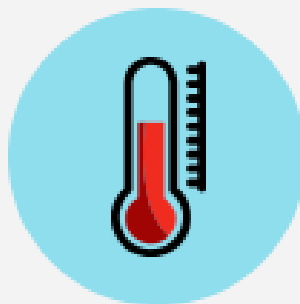
3

KEEP THE BEDROOM FOR SLEEP

Ensuring the bedroom is optimized for relaxing, unwinding and sleeping is essential. Get your bedroom ready:



Eliminate noises that may disturb your sleep



Keep bedroom at the right temperature (18-22C/64-72F)



Remove all electronic devices



Ensure the room is dark enough



Ensure your bed is comfortable enough



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