

Sleep Awareness Month

Issue 2

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“Test Your Sleep Knowledge”

True/False Quiz

1. During sleep your brain rests.
2. Lack of sleep affects your emotional stability.
3. You can learn to function normally with one or two fewer hours of sleep a night than you need.
4. Boredom makes you feel sleepy, even if you've had enough sleep.
5. Resting in bed with your eyes closed cannot satisfy your body's need for sleep.
6. Snoring is not harmful as long as it doesn't disturb others or wake you up.
7. A lack of sleep affects physical performance more than mental performance.
8. Raising the volume of your radio will help you stay awake while driving.
9. The older you get the fewer hours of sleep you need.
10. Eight hours of sleep is a good guideline for the amount of sleep you need.

Facts About Exercise and Sleep

Stanford University researchers recently divided a group of older adults into an exercise and a non-exercise group. After four months the exercising group experienced a superior quality of sleep and fell asleep faster once they went to bed. They reduced the time it took them to fall asleep from 30 minutes to 15 minutes. That's good news. However, there is also some evidence that regular exercisers may need more sleep. A meta-analysis of over 40 studies concluded that as physical activity increases, so does one's need for sleep. So what's the mechanism involved here? There are two likely explanations.

Since exercise results in greater utilization of energy stores (glycogen and fat), elevates body temperature, and facilitates muscle tissue breakdown, it is an effective catalyst for promoting sleep (since sleep conserves energy stores, decreases body temperature, and allows for tissue restitution). The other explanation is that exercise promotes anxiety reduction, and for years we have known that anxiety is related to psychological arousal and is a primary factor in sleep disturbances.

Messiah College Students and Sleep

Some interesting statistics emerged from Messiah's most recent national College Health Assessment Report. Over 600 students completed the exhaustive survey and it's clear that sleep difficulties are present on our campus like they are at every other university. Here's what we found:

- 14% of Messiah students reported that sleep difficulties were very difficult to handle in the past year
- Only 8% of the students reported that they woke feeling well rested at least 6 days of the week
- 44% reported that daytime sleepiness was more than a little problem
- 14% reported that sleep difficulties negatively affected their grades

Sleep and Academic/Work Performance

A study at St. Lawrence University in Canton, N.Y., indicated what may seem obvious to most: all-nighters are not an effective way to succeed in school. Two-thirds of the students in the study reported that they had pulled at least one all-nighter during a semester. But all-nighters result in sleep deprivation, and nobody does their best work when sleep deprived. In the study the researchers found a strong correlation between frequency of all-nighters and later self-reported average bedtimes, and slightly lower GPAs.

But of course it's not just students who may be sleep deprived. According to a 2008 National Sleep Foundation poll, almost a third of American employees report that daytime sleepiness interferes with their daily activities at least a few days each month. Thirteen percent reported regularly taking a nap during work. Here are some indications you may be sleep deprived:

- Falling asleep in less than 5 minutes after hitting the sack
- Fighting to stay awake while driving
- Not making decisions as quickly as you once did
- A noticeable decrease in your creativity
- Lapses in memory and a decrease in reaction time
- Unusual mood changes

Answers to the True and False Quiz: 1.F 2.T 3.F 4.F 5.T 6.F 7.F 8.F 9.F 10.F (see ACSM's *Health & Fitness Journal* Vol. 4 # 6, 2000, p. 17-19 for further explanations)

Behavioral Sleep Medicine, 2008; Vol. 6 (1), pp. 16-31; <http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/guide/sleep-deprivation-workplace>; Running & Fitness, Vol. 27, # 5, 2009; JAMA: The Journal Of The American Medical Association, 1997, Vol. 277 (1), pp. 32-7.