



Health Insights

March 2021



The Importance of Sleep

While the recommended amount of sleep is seven hours a night, one in three adults do not get that much sleep at night. While this might not seem problematic, consistently failing to get enough sleep can put you at risk of significant health problems. In fact, not getting enough sleep is linked to a variety of chronic conditions, like Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, depression, and obesity. Moreover, failing to regularly get enough sleep can lead to chronic fatigue, which can increase the risk of productivity issues at work and distracted driving crashes.

How Much Sleep Is Enough?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adults ages 18 and older should get seven hours or more of sleep per night. The CDC also stresses that all sleep isn't created equal, and that good sleep quality is essential to your health and well-being.

To determine your sleep quality, evaluate if you're waking up multiple times throughout the night, if you wake up feeling unrested (even if you slept for seven hours) or if you experience breathing problems while you're sleeping. While your sleep quality may be improved by implementing better sleep habits, symptoms of poor sleep quality may be attributed to a sleep disorder that you seek help from your doctor for.

Benefits of Getting Enough Sleep

Sleep is essential for maintaining a healthy, productive, and low-stress lifestyle. Here are just a few benefits of getting a good night's sleep:

- **Increased productivity and work performance:** Giving your body enough time to go through all the sleep stages is necessary for energy, muscle repair, improved memory, and the release or regulation of important hormones that are essential for everyday functions within the body.
- **Decreased weight gain:** According to the National Sleep Foundation, not allowing your body enough time for rest and regulation can lead to an increased appetite. The particular hormones that give you the feeling of being full or hungry can become irregular, which may cause increased feelings of hunger that lead to weight gain.
- **Improved mental health:** Getting enough sleep can help alleviate feelings of fatigue that may contribute to stress, depression, and anxiety. Symptoms of fatigue can be drowsiness, loss of energy, and even mood swings.

Tips for Improving Your Sleep Habits

1. Eat nutritiously and avoid big meals right before going to bed.
2. Exercise regularly, but avoid vigorous exercise close to bedtime.
3. Avoid stimulants like caffeine and nicotine before bed.
4. Stick to a schedule, even on the weekends.
5. Put the electronics away and refrain from using them for at least an hour before bed.

Mental Health Moment

Sleep and Electronic Devices

If you're having a hard time falling and staying asleep, devices like your cellphone, TV, and tablet may be to blame.

Researchers at Harvard identified three main ways that using your phone, or any electronic device, before going to bed can derail your sleep schedule:

1. **Melatonin suppression:** The Harvard study revealed that those who used electronic devices before going to sleep had lower levels of the sleep-regulating hormone, melatonin. That's because the blue light emitted by electronic devices suppresses the production of melatonin, which controls your circadian rhythm—your body's natural sleep and wake clock.
2. **Later sleep onset:** The study also found that the amount of time it took to fall asleep was longer for those who used electronic devices than for those who didn't. If you're mindlessly scrolling through social media sites instead of reading a book or meditating, it's more likely that you'll have a harder time falling asleep.
3. **Reduced REM sleep:** Research shows that electronic device usage before bed results in a reduced amount of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep cycles. REM sleep is a vital component of our sleep patterns.

To prevent the harmful effects of electronic devices:

- Check your device's settings for a "nighttime" mode, which adjusts the screen lighting to promote sleep.
- Refrain from using your phone for at least an hour before bed.
- Set your device's sound settings to "silent" so you won't be woken by texts or emails while you're trying to sleep.
- Try reading a book or meditating to relax before bed instead of using your phone or watching TV.

Selecting a Mental Health Professional

For the many Americans that seek help from mental health professionals, selecting a provider is an important decision that should be made carefully. Credentials, competence, and your comfort level with the provider are worth considering.

Psychiatrists: Have medical degrees, can prescribe medication, and have completed three years of residency training (beyond medical school) in mental health care.

Psychologists: Have a doctorate in psychology and generally complete one or two years of internship prior to licensure.

Professional Counselors: Have a minimum of a master's degree in a mental health discipline and has at least two years of post-graduate supervised experience.

Marriage and Family Therapists: Typically have a master's degree or doctorate in marriage and family therapy, and has at least one year of supervised practice.

Finding the right mental health professional requires a bit of work. If you are struggling with your mental health, it can be difficult to do that work on your own. If you are in this situation, ask family, friends, or your primary physician for assistance. You can also ask your insurance carrier to provide a list of covered carriers or utilize an EAP if your company provides one.

Also take into account factors that are important to you, like age, race, gender, religion, and cultural background. It is not wrong to rule out certain providers because they don't meet the criteria; you will be establishing a long-term relationship with this person, and you need to feel as comfortable with them as possible.

Questions to Ask Potential Providers?

- What types of treatment do you provide?
- What is your training or experience with my problem area?
- How will we determine treatment goals?
- How will we measure my progress?
- What do you expect from me?
- Do you charge for missed appointments?



Honey Roasted Sweet Potatoes

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs red-skinned sweet potatoes
- 1 tsp fresh lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 Tbsp honey

Directions:

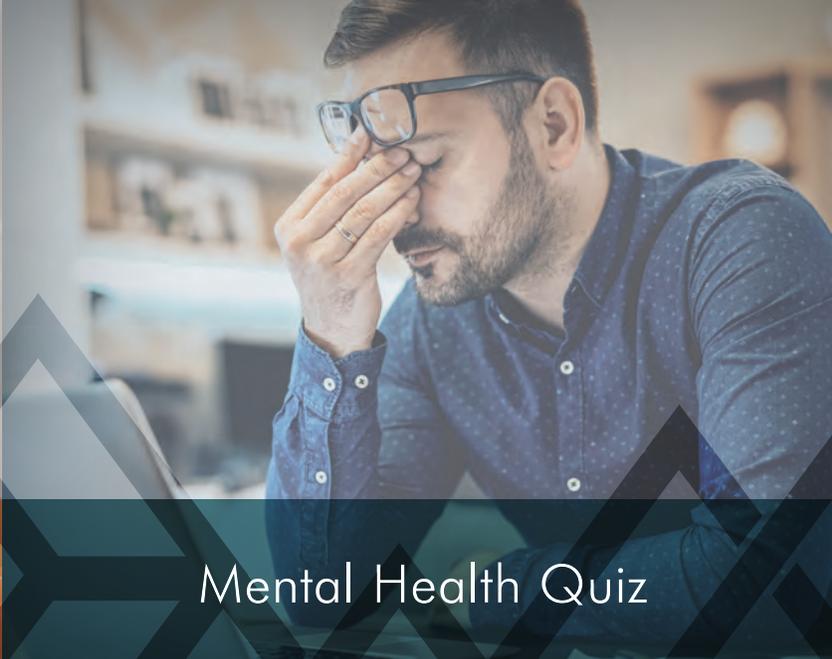
Preheat oven to 350° F.

Peel and cut the sweet potatoes into 1-inch pieces and put in a 9 by 13 baking dish. In a small bowl whisk together olive oil, honey, and lemon juice. Pour mixture over potatoes and toss to coat. Sprinkle with the salt and bake, stirring occasionally, for about 1 hour or until potatoes are tender.

Nutrition: Calories: 167 Total Fat: 4.5 grams Saturated Fat: .5 grams Carbohydrates: 30 grams Dietary Fiber: 4 grams Protein: 2 grams

Krieger, E. (2014, January 28). Honey roasted sweet potatoes. Retrieved February 08, 2021, from <https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/ellie-krieger/honey-roasted-sweet-potatoes-recipe-1945869>

See page 5 for quiz answers



Mental Health Quiz

The Importance of Sleep

1. One in every ____ American adults do not get the recommended seven hours of sleep.
a. 3 b. 4 c. 5 d. 6
2. Not getting enough sleep is linked to which of the following chronic conditions?
a. Heart Disease d. Type 2 Diabetes
b. Depression e. All of the above
c. Obesity

Sleep and Electronic Devices

3. Which of the following is NOT one of the negative effects of electronic devices on sleep?
a. Later sleep onset c. Decreased appetite
b. Reduced REM sleep d. Melatonin suppression
4. Which of the following answers is a suggested tip for preventing the harmful effects of electronic devices on sleep?
a. Refrain from using your phone for at least an hour before bed. c. Switch your phone to "nighttime" mode and "silent" before going to bed.
b. Read a book or meditate before bed instead of watching TV or using your phone. d. All of the above

Mental Health Moment: Selecting a Mental Health Professional

5. What is one question you should ask when selecting a Mental Health Professional? _____

Healthy Habits Calendar

March 2021 – Sleep Health

Focus on small steps this month to improve your health-including sleeping habits.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Lights Out Challenge: Try going to bed at the same time 5 nights out of the week.	2 Tuesday Tips: Put some non-starch veggies like squash, peas, tomatoes, or zucchini on your grocery list.	3	4	5 Friday Fitness: Go to the gym or find a workout online to follow.	6 Saturday Service: Call or visit someone who may be lonely.
7	8 Motivation Monday: Make time to read.	9	10 Wellness Wednesday! Go for a walk. Natural Sunlight during the day improves sleep.	11 Challenge Check-in: Update your Lights Out Challenge tracker.	12	13
14 Sunday Sleep: Avoid electronics for 1 hour before going to bed.	15	16 Tuesday Tips: Try blue-light blocking glasses or a blue-light blocking app to reduce blue light exposure.	17	18	19 Friday Fitness: Do 30 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise to improve your sleep quality tonight.	20 Saturday Service: Sell something that you no longer need.
21	22 Motivation Monday: Try something new.	23	24 Wellness Wednesday! Drink a glass of water before every meal.	25 Challenge Check-in: Last week for the Lights Out Challenge.	26	27
28 Sunday Sleep: Start your week right by going to bed earlier than usual.	29	30 Tuesday Tips: Don't eat late at night. Late-night snacking decreases sleep quality.	31			



Employee Name _____

Date (m-d-yyyy) _____

Challenge: Lights Out!

30 Day Challenge:

This month's challenge invites you to go to bed at the same time for 5 days each week for the duration of the challenge. Being consistent with your sleep schedule is very important because it will reset your body's internal clock. By doing this, you will fall asleep easier and have more deep, restful sleep. You might even consider tracking your sleeping habits and setting goals to improve them. Eliminate stress before bed by keeping your space clean and writing down anything that is on your mind. Avoiding exercise, big meals, and electronics before bedtime will also help you sleep better.

Week 1

What time did you go to bed?

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

Week 2

What time did you go to bed?

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

Week 3

What time did you go to bed?

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

Week 4

What time did you go to bed?

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

Answers to Quiz: Q1: a.3 | Q2: e. All of the above | Q3: c. Decreased appetite | Q4: d. All of the above