MedBen WellCare

benefitness for you.

Want to Get Fit? Hit the Sack!

When people talk about the positive changes they need to make to get in better shape, diet and exercise invariably top the list. But there's an equally important lifestyle modification that gets comparatively scant attention: improving your sleep habits.

Few things undermine an individual's get-fit goals quite like a lack of sleep. The resultant fatigue typically leads to poor eating choices and putting off workouts "until I'm better rested." Worse still, chronic sleep deprivation can be linked to dizziness, headaches and depression – and can even put you at higher risk for developing diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and other serious illnesses.

Exactly how much sleep one needs varies from person to person. Eight hours a night is the generally accepted rule of thumb, but depending on such factors as your age, gender and overall health, 6 or 7 hours may be sufficient – or conversely, you may need 9 or 10 hours to perform at your full capacity.
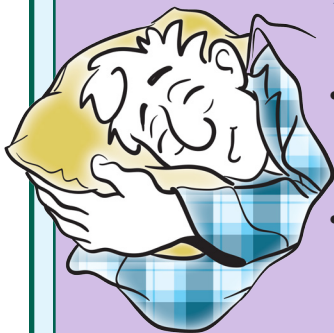
The important thing is to pay attention to the signs your body is sending. If you truly can't function without a jolt of caffeine or find it hard to focus on what you're doing, lack of sleep could very well be the cause. However, if you believe you're getting enough shut-eye but still feel exhausted, it's a good idea to talk to your family doctor.

A Good Night's Sleep Starts Well Before Bedtime

Healthy habits during the daylight hours will make your slumber more restful.

- Stick to consistent sleep and wake schedules, even on weekends.

- Alcohol, tobacco products and chocolate can disrupt sleep, so minimize or eliminate their usage.

- Don't consume caffeine for a pick-me-up. Try yogurt or nuts instead.

- Complete vigorous exercise 3+ hours before bedtime.

- Avoid sleep-aid medicines if possible.

- Wind down with a warm bath and milk or herbal tea.

- Create a sleep-conducive environment that is dark, quiet, comfortable and cool.

- Nod off to soft, instrumental music instead of the TV.

MedBen WellLiving

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