

Rest, Relaxation and Exercise

It can be hard to maintain a healthy lifestyle in the hustle and bustle world that we live in. If you are in school, commuting to work and/or taking care of your family, time can seem to evaporate. Taking good care of your body and mind can make a difference in how healthy you are in general and how well you cope with change. Exercising, relaxing and getting enough rest will help you do better and enjoy life more. Taking good care of yourself may require a little extra time and effort, but it's worth it.

Rest

Getting the correct amount of quality sleep is essential to your ability to learn and process memories. Additionally, sleep helps restore your body's energy, repair muscle tissue and triggers the release of hormones that effect growth and appetite. Just like exercise, the amount of sleep you need depends on your age. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute recommends at least 11-12 hours for preschool-aged children, 10 hours for school-aged children, 9-10 hours for teens and 7-8 hours for adults. Quality of sleep matters too. Quality of sleep refers to how much time you spend in REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. REM is the most restorative of the 5 cycles of sleep and should account for one-fourth of the time you spend sleeping.

If you don't get enough sleep, or good quality sleep every once in a while, you may notice that you wake up feeling groggy, not well rested, and experience difficulty concentrating. If you consistently do not get enough quality sleep, you are at higher risk for conditions like heart disease, diabetes, obesity, headaches and depression. Try to stay in the suggested guidelines for amount of sleep - getting too much sleep on a regular basis can be problematic for health as well. If you feel as though you are not getting enough sleep on a regular basis and it is affecting your work or personal life, talk to your primary care doctor to discuss whether you may have an underlying sleep disorder, like insomnia or sleep apnea.

Tips for Getting a Good Night's Sleep

- Avoid stimulants like caffeine and nicotine in the evening.
- Set a wake and sleep schedule to go by every day of the week, including weekends.
- Keep your thermostat at a cool, but comfortable, temperature between 60-70 degrees.
- Avoid afternoon naps.
- Try not to watch TV or do work in bed; if you do, stop an hour before you would like to be asleep.
- If you typically exercise in the afternoon or evening, try to fit your workout in earlier in the day.

Relaxation

While there are no specific guidelines for how much relaxation a person should incorporate into their lifestyle, making time to unwind and enjoy life is an important part of maintaining good health. Deep relaxation, like meditation, when practiced regularly not only relieves stress and anxiety, but also is shown to improve mood. Deep relaxation has many other potential benefits as well—it can decrease blood pressure, relieve pain, and improve your immune and cardiovascular systems. Making time to find enjoyment is also an important element of relaxation. Laughing decreases pain, may help your heart and lungs, promotes muscle relaxation and can reduce anxiety. If you aren't getting enough time to relax, you may find yourself feeling tense and stressed out. Long-term stress, if not addressed, can cause a host of health issues, including chest pain, headaches, digestive issues, anxiety, depression changes in sexual desire and the ability to focus.



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Exercise

Getting the appropriate amount of exercise benefits nearly all aspects of a person's health. Not only does exercise help control weight, it also improves mental health, mood, chances of living longer, and the strength of your bones and muscles. Adults ages 18 and over need at least 2½ hours of moderate aerobic activity each week and muscle strengthening exercises twice a week. Children and adolescents need an hour of physical activity every day, with vigorous activity at least 3 days each week. They also need muscle and bone strengthening exercises at least 3 days of the week.

Moderate intensive activities include briskly walking, gardening, playing doubles tennis or a leisurely bike ride. Vigorous intensive activities include jogging, running, swimming laps, hiking or group activities like Zumba. Muscle-strengthening activities to include in your routine twice a week include yoga, lifting weights, resistance band exercises and body-weight resistance activities. You don't have to spend hours on a treadmill each day to meet the recommended amounts of physical activity. Ten minutes of moderate or vigorous activity at a time 15 times a week (roughly twice a day) will take care of it.

Not getting enough exercise puts you at increased risk for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, high blood pressure and some cancers. Additionally, if you sit or stand for too long, you are more likely to have back pain, so it is important to alternate standing and sitting throughout the day and make sure to move around periodically.

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