Many Americans maintain a serious sleep debt by failing to get enough sleep each night. Often, people are sleep deprived without realizing it. College students need on average 8-9 hours of sleep per night. Deep sleep is necessary for problem solving, reasoning and consolidating information. Many factors can affect your sleep quality, some of which cannot be controlled. However, you can adopt certain habits to encourage better sleep.

**GENERAL TIPS FOR QUALITY SLEEP**

- **Keep a sleep schedule.** Try to fall asleep and wake up at the same time every day to keep your body in its natural rhythm.
- **Sleep in a continuous block.** People need long periods of uninterrupted sleep.
- **Keep naps short.** A 15-20 minute nap can increase alertness and productivity, but an hour long nap will make you go into deeper sleep and you can wake up feeling worse.
- **Exercise daily.** Physical exercise results in a more restful sleep.

**FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- **Sleep medications** can be used on occasion; however, prolonged use can cause dependence and reduced effectiveness. Many over the counter sleep aids contain antihistamines and can cause residual drowsiness the same day. Melatonin is a hormone that regulates your sleep cycle. Melatonin supplements can be bought over the counter and can help treat sleep disorders.
- **If you have noticed problems with snoring, gasping or abrupt awakening,** this may be a sign of sleep apnea, which is strongly associated with poor sleep and daytime sleepiness. Speak with your provider if you are concerned you have sleep apnea.
- **If you are falling asleep during normal activities,** you may have a more serious sleep disorder like narcolepsy or cataplexy. Speak with your healthcare provider if you are concerned you have one of these conditions.

**RESOURCES**

- **FamilyDoctor.org** [https://familydoctor.org/melatonin/](https://familydoctor.org/melatonin/)
- **Mayo Clinic** [https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/sleep/art-20048379](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/sleep/art-20048379)