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**UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE EXTENSION**

Contact:

**Sleep is often overlooked as part of a healthy lifestyle**

Forty percent of adult Tennesseans reported sleeping less than seven hours each night, which is considered the optimal amount for most adults, according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and Sleep Research Society. Not getting enough sleep is linked to chronic diseases and other conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, obesity, and depression. It is also associated with an increased risk of motor vehicle accidents.

“New Year’s goals often include eating better or exercising more, but getting adequate sleep should be added to the opportunities for health. Better sleep isn’t a luxury. It’s another positive change option to start in the New Year or any time,” Amy Elizer, UT Extension Specialist, said. “Adults, especially parents, have many responsibilities and stressors that can cause them to get too little sleep. Other people may have a sleep disorder, like insomnia or sleep apnea.”

 The relationship between lack of sleep and the development of chronic disease varies based on disease type. Sleep quality and duration have surfaced as predictors of Hemoglobin A1c, a marker of blood sugar control. Shorter sleep duration has been linked to metabolic changes that can be linked to obesity. For children and teenagers, short sleep duration can negatively affect the hypothalamus, the part of the brain that regulates appetite and energy expenditure. While disturbed sleep is considered a symptom of depression, these symptoms have been shown to decrease once patients with sleep apnea had that disorder treated and better sleep returned.

More



 Some sleep issues are more readily resolved than others. Simple tips to try include:

* Going to bed at the same time each night and getting up at the same time each morning, including the

weekends. This habit reinforces your body’s circadian rhythm response to get sleepy when it is dark and more easily fall asleep.

* For similar reasons, darkening the room, making it quiet, and setting a comfortable temperature are helpful for falling and staying asleep.
* Removing back-lit electronic devices, such as cell phones, tablets, computers, and smartphones, from the bedroom or refraining from their use for at least an hour before bedtime reduces blue light. Blue light delays the body’s production of melatonin in the evenings. This reduces feelings of sleepiness.
* Avoiding large, fatty meals, caffeine, and alcohol before bedtime reduces digestive issues. They can also increase metabolism, which can lead to vivid dreams and nightmares and other sleep disruptions.
* Being physically active during the day can help you fall asleep more easily at night.

If lack of sleep disrupts a person’s daily activities, they may want to discuss the problem with their healthcare provider to determine whether they have a sleep disorder. Logging sleep habits can be useful before seeking help from the healthcare provider. A downloadable sleep diary can be found at <https://sleepeducation.org/resources/sleep-diary/>. Completing the diary may also help determine habits to change for better sleep. More information on sleep and sleep disorders can be found at <https://sleepeducation.org/>.

For more information, contact [AGENT NAME AND PREFERRED CONTACT INFORMATION.

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