

## Are You Getting Enough Sleep?



Lack of sleep, or "sleep debt," can leave you feeling tired, listless and sleepy on a daily basis. Until your body starts getting the sleep it needs every night -- most people need 8 hours, say the experts -- it won't function as efficiently and your health will be at risk.

Over the last hundred years, our average nightly sleep has dropped from 9 to 7.5 hours, with a third of adults now getting an hour less than that. And, says the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), almost half of adults admit they sleep less so they can work or play more.

### What's wrong with that?

Everything. Sleep is not simply a passive activity. It's one of the most important elements in a healthy lifestyle, as important as good nutrition and exercise, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).

Researchers know that a lack of deep sleep -- as opposed to irregular or fragmented sleep -- undermines the body's ability to fight off disease. A growing list of health risks has been documented in recent studies. Heart disease, diabetes, and obesity have all been linked with chronic sleep loss.

How we live is affecting how we sleep. Our sleep deficit can be related to too much caffeine, nicotine, or alcohol. Many times it's related to work - stress from work, putting in long hours at work, working night shifts, or working on the home computer until the second we go to sleep.

### A prescription for better sleep:

- Try to go to bed at the same time every night.
- Get regular daily exercise.
- Don't eat within 4 hours of going to bed.
- Establish a pre-bedtime routine -- brushing your teeth or reading -- that lets your body know it's time for sleep.
- Avoid caffeine six hours before bedtime. Avoid alcohol and tobacco two hours before bedtime.
- Get up at the same time every day, no matter when you went to sleep.
- Unwind from daily activities early so your mind is clear at bedtime.
- Sleep in a dark, cool, quiet room on a comfortable mattress.

**Please contact Cascade if you would like further information.  
The EAP is here to help.**

