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The best thing you can do for your health: Sleep Well

Do you think you got enough sleep this past week? Can you remember the last time you woke up without an alarm clock, feeling refreshed, not needing caffeine? If the answer to any of these questions is “no,” you are not alone. Two-thirds of adults throughout all developed nations fail to obtain the recommended eight hours of nightly sleep.

Indeed, surveys by the UK Sleep Council and YouGov reveal that one out of every three people you pass on the streets of Britain regularly suffer from poor sleep. I doubt you are surprised by these facts, but you may be surprised by the consequences.

Insufficient sleep is now one of the most significant lifestyle factors influencing whether or not you will develop Alzheimer’s disease. During sleep, a remarkable sewage system in the brain, called the glymphatic system, kicks into high gear. As you enter deep sleep, this sanitization system cleanses the brain of a sticky, toxic protein linked to Alzheimer’s, known as beta amyloid. Without sufficient sleep, you fail to get that power cleanse. With each passing night of insufficient sleep, that Alzheimer’s disease risk escalates, like compounding interest on a loan.



Routinely sleeping less than six hours a night also compromises your immune system, significantly increasing your risk of cancer. So much so, that recently the World Health Organization classified any form of night-time shiftwork as a probable carcinogen.

I believe it is therefore time for us, as individuals and as nations, to reclaim our right to a full night of sleep, without embarrassment or the terrible stigma of laziness. I fully understand that this prescription of which I write requires a shift in our cultural, professional, and global appreciation of sleep.

Governments and health institutes must themselves become a voice that educates society about sleep. Healthcare systems have launched wonderfully effective public-health campaigns concerning influenza, the need for physical activity, and optimal diet and nutrition. However, I cannot recall any government launching a national public health campaign centered on the essential importance of sleep as both disease prevention and treatment. I hope this will change, and I would be delighted to help any and all such efforts.

Put simply: sleep – a consistent seven- to nine-hour opportunity each night – is the single most effective thing we can do to reset our brain and body health each day, and the reason I revere and adore sleep (scientifically and personally).

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/feb/09/best-thing-you-can-do-for-your-health-sleep-well>

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