



## How Sleep Affects Your Immunity

When it comes to your health, sleep plays an important role. While more sleep won't necessarily prevent you from getting sick, skimping on it could adversely affect your immune system, leaving you susceptible to a bad cold or case of the flu. To keep yourself snuffle-free this season, here's what you need to know:

Without sufficient sleep, your body makes fewer cytokines, a type of protein that targets infection and inflammation, effectively creating an immune response. Cytokines are both produced and released during sleep, causing a double whammy if you skimp on shut-eye. Chronic sleep loss even makes the flu vaccine less effective by reducing your body's ability to respond.

To stay healthy, especially during the influenza season, get the recommended seven to eight hours of sleep a night. This will help keep your immune system in fighting shape and also protect you from other health issues including heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. If your sleep schedule is interrupted by a busy workweek or other factors,

try to make up for the lost rest with naps. Taking a 30-minute nap has been shown to help decrease stress and offset the negative effects that sleep deprivation has on the immune system.

Of course, there's more to boosting your immunity and guarding against illness than getting ample sleep. It's also important to practice smart stay-healthy strategies such as washing your hands, avoiding close contact with people who are sick, and getting an annual flu shot. And remember: Even if you do come down with a case of seasonal sniffles, you'll be able to bounce back faster if your body is well rested.

Source: National Sleep Foundation

**With a physician's recommendation, Legacy can facilitate an in-home sleep study that can help diagnose sleep disorders, such as obstructive sleep apnea. The study provides accurate information that is economical and convenient for the patient.**

**Contact Legacy for more information.**



### Get Your Zzzzs

In the upcoming months, RoyOMartin's health-services team will be conducting a new awareness campaign called "Get Your Zzzzs."

This six-part program will look at how fatigue affects health and safety. It will also educate employees on how to create sleep schedules, evaluate quality of sleep, and check for possible medical issues such as sleep disorders.

## Is sleep deprivation making you less productive?

Everyone knows that sleep is good for you. What you may not know is that depriving yourself of sleep is really bad for your brain and is, in fact, slowly killing you. It puts you at risk for early death from high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, heart failure and more. Why? According to research from the University of Rochester there is now direct evidence that shows why your brain cells need real sleep and what happens in your body while you are sleeping. When you sleep, your body literally rejuvenates and removes toxic proteins from your brain to allow your cells to function properly, to think and focus better, and to pump up your immunity. So if you are not sleeping enough, or deeply enough, your brain is less focused, your body is less able to heal, and you become stressed at every level.

Skipping sleep impairs your brain function. It slows your ability to process information and problem solve, react quickly and appropriately and you become irritable and can easily respond to others more

negatively. Sleep deprivation compromises your body's ability to properly metabolize foods and can cause you to gain weight. People who get less than 6 hours of sleep a night are 30% more likely to become obese because of the disruption in your normal cycle of burning calories.

How much sleep do you need? 7-9 hours per night for adults, 10-11 for teens and children, 16-18 for infants. Here are some tips on how to make getting enough sleep a reality:

- Stay away from sleeping pills and alcohol. Both can disrupt the brain's natural sleep process.
- Stop drinking caffeine (at least after lunch). You can vastly improve your quality of sleep by this one action. Caffeine reduces REM sleep, the deep sleep you need to recuperate.
- Avoid blue light at night. This is a huge one! Blue light plays an important role in your mood, energy level and sleep quality. Do not sleep with the TV on.

- Wake up at the same time every day. Consistency is key to how your brain works. Get a habit or rhythm going and keep it up!
- No binge sleeping on the weekend. This just makes you groggy on Monday and throws your sleep pattern off. Your productivity will be way down.
- Learn how much sleep you really need. Experts say 7-9 hours. Go to sleep earlier and your body will naturally wake up. Find your number and feel better and sharper within a week.
- Stop checking messages at a certain time each night. Surveys show that 60% of people check work emails until they go to sleep. Set a time and stop, allow your eyes rest from blue light, and set a go to sleep routine.
- Prayer and Meditation. A 6-week study proved that you can cut your fall asleep time in half when you mindfully meditate or spend time in prayer prior to sleep.

Source: National Safety Council