

Student Success Tools

A College Student's Guide to Sleep

Sleep recharges the brain and allows the body to relax and heal. This is accomplished in several ways:

- During sleep the blood supply to the muscles is increased which helps to repair muscles.
- The body's metabolic activity is at its lowest, and the pituitary gland's secretions of growth hormones are peaked in deep sleep, which allows for tissue growth and repair.
- The body increases our immune response to infections during sleep.
- REM sleep plays a major role in facilitating memory storage and retention, organization and reorganization, as well as new learning and performance. When sleep is disrupted, the brain's ability to transfer short-term memory into long-term memory is impaired.

Too little sleep means...

- Stress, anxiety and loss of coping skills
- Reduced immunity to disease and viral infection
- Feelings of lethargy and mood shifts
- Impaired judgment
- Reduction in productivity, cognitive functioning, and reaction time including:
 - Ability to concentrate, remember, handle complex tasks, think logically, assimilate and analyze new information, and think critically
 - Decision-making skills
 - Vocabulary and communication skills
 - Creativity
 - Motor skills and coordination
 - Perceptual skills



**Mississippi
College**
A CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

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You may not be getting enough sleep if you...

- Fall asleep within five minutes of getting into bed
- Cannot wake up at the appropriate time without an alarm clock
- Feel sleepy during the day
- Struggle to get out of bed in the morning
- Fall asleep in meetings and lectures
- Need caffeine to keep you awake
- Often sleep extra hours on the weekend
- Fall asleep watching TV
- Have trouble concentrating and remembering
- Fall asleep after heavy meals or after one or two alcoholic drinks

The Golden Rules of Sleep

- **Get adequate amounts of sleep every night.** Sleep research is often done with college students since their sleep is often disrupted from staying up late studying or hanging out with friends. Most adults need between 7-9 hours a night to feel rested and to be at your best. If you get 4 hours on one night and then sleep 10 hours on the weekend, you may be able to make up for being sleep deprived. Identify the amount of sleep you need to be fully alert all day long. Get that amount of sleep every night.
- **Establish a regular sleep schedule.** Go to bed at the same time every night and wake up without an alarm clock at the same time every morning, including weekends. Your biological waking and sleeping clock is not programmed for weekends. Even slight changes in sleep cycles can cause problems.



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- **Get continuous sleep.** For sleep to be rejuvenating, you should get your required amount of sleep in one continuous block. Six hours of solid, uninterrupted sleep is better than 8 hours of disrupted sleep. It is also better to get a good night's sleep than a light night of sleep and naps during the day. If there are disruptions in your sleep, find ways to eliminate these disruptions.
- **Make up for lost sleep.** Make up for any lost sleep as soon as possible. Occasionally it is all right to have a late night; however, it is important to note that reducing sleep by one hour for seven nights has the same effect as staying awake for twenty-four consecutive hours once a week. You cannot make up for lost sleep in one night or on the weekends. Sleep was lost over time, and it must be repaid over time as well. In order to do this, go to bed earlier rather than waking up later.
- **Exercise.** Exercise has a wide range of physical and mental benefits, which improves sleep. Exercise is most beneficial on sleep when it occurs within 3 to 6 hours of bedtime.

Other Important Sleep Tips

- Stop smoking
- Reduce caffeine intake
- Avoid alcohol near bedtime
- Try relaxation techniques
- Maintain a relaxing atmosphere in the bedroom
- Value your sleep and make it a priority
- Keep a log to track the amount of sleep and any interruptions that occur each night

