

Healthy Sleep Helps to Avoid Life Pitfalls

Every night when the Walt Disney World theme parks close, the most important hours of the day begin. Big lights go up, and massive crews of workers repair and clean every ride, every walkway, and every concession stand.

When the gates open the next morning, the parks are completely renewed. The trash from the previous day is gone, and the roller coasters are in top condition again.

A similar thing happens every night. During those precious hours your body shuts down and repairs itself. Your immune system recharges. Your major organs are restored. Old cells are being replaced with new ones. Your mind relaxes and orders its thoughts, creating a healthy mental state.

That's why you need wonderful, nourishing, restorative sleep and rest.

Edge of Collapse

Lack of sleep is just as disastrous for you as an individual. A good night's sleep is free. A bad night's sleep is costly, because it takes a toll on your health.

We live in a world where day and night no longer matter. Thanks to modern technology, we can work and play around the clock. This is not the way our bodies or minds were made to operate. God gave us a promise of deep, restorative sleep. Psalm 127:2 (niv) says, "He grants sleep to those he loves." To those who are tired, He says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28, niv).

Sleep and rest are so important because of what they do for

your health.

1. Sleep regulates release of important hormones. When you sleep, growth hormone is secreted. This causes children to grow, and it regulates muscle mass and helps control fat in adults. When you don't sleep enough, this hormone's function is disrupted.

2. Sleep slows the aging process. The term "beauty rest" is literally true. Sleep slows the aging process, and some say it is one of the most important "secrets" for averting wrinkles.

3. Sleep boosts the immune system. People who sleep nine hours a night instead of seven hours have greater than normal "natural killer cell" activity. Natural killer cells destroy viruses, bacteria, and cancer cells.

4. Sleep improves brain function. One study shows that short-term sleep deprivation may decrease brain activity related to alertness and cognitive performance.

5. Sleep reduces cortisol levels. Excessive stress raises cortisol levels, which disrupt neurotransmitter balance in the brain, causing you to be more irritable and prone to depression, anxiety, and insomnia.

What Happens When You Don't Sleep

The medical research is clear about what happens when you don't get sufficient sleep.

1. You increase your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

2. You become clumsy and "sleep drunk." Lack of sleep slows your reaction time, shortens your attention span, and impairs your memory, your decision-making process, and your coordination.

3. You jeopardize your job. A third of America's adult workers either missed work or made mistakes at work in the past three

months because of a lack of sleep. Nobody drinks on the job, but plenty of people come to work after pulling all-nighters or getting too little sleep, thus functioning as if they were drunk.

4. You endanger your life and the lives of others. Sleep deprivation is responsible for at least 100,000 crashes and 1,500 fatalities a year, according to a 2002 report from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

5. You reduce your sex drive.

 **6. You invite diseases.** A host of physical conditions are associated with insomnia, including chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, chronic pain syndrome, autoimmune diseases, hypertension, obesity, depression, and other forms of mental illness.

7. You jeopardize your marriage. Studies show higher rates of divorce among people who don't get adequate sleep.

Getting the adequate amount of sleep is beneficial to you, and it benefits those around you.

The preceding is an excerpt from *The Seven Pillars of Health* by Don Colbert, M.D. The book can be purchased at [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), or [eBay](#).