



Sweet dreams

Waking up to the benefits of sleep

Aetna Resources For LivingSM

Many people think a good night's sleep is a luxury. In fact, sleep is necessary for physical, emotional and mental well-being.

Are you sleep-deprived?

If so, you're not alone. One in three Americans don't get the sleep they need.¹ The result? Without enough sleep you may be irritable, stressed-out, disorganized, accident-prone and more.

How does sleep help you?

Many people understand how healthy food choices and exercise help them. But the benefits of regular sleep are not as well-known.

Here are just some of the advantages you enjoy when you get the sleep your body needs:^{2,3}

- **Immunity boost.** A healthy immune system depends on sleep. While other systems in your body are resting, your immune system is at work rebuilding, reducing inflammation and fighting off illness.
- **Stress reduction.** As you wind down for bedtime, your body releases calming hormones like serotonin and melatonin. Having these hormones in your system helps counteract and reduce the stress hormones — adrenaline and cortisol — to give your body a break from tension. So sleep actually lets your mind and body relax and restore as hormone levels balance out.
- **Better heart health.** Lack of sleep may trigger some major risk factors for heart attacks and strokes. Getting enough sleep can contribute to better heart health.

¹[1 in 3 adults don't get enough sleep](#). CDC. February 18, 2016. Accessed March 2019.

²[11 surprising health benefits of sleep](#). Health. March 4, 2019. Accessed March 2019.

³[Barns, Larua. Top 10 benefits of a good night's sleep](#). Sleep Science. Accessed March 2019.

- **Memory improvement.** Your body is resting, but your brain is always at work — even while you sleep. When you rest, your brain has a chance to process new experiences and information. It creates connections and links that become your memory.
- **Increased safety.** The disorganization and mental foggy that come from sleep deprivation can lead to serious outcomes. For instance, car accidents, falls and mistakes occur more often when people are tired. Experts even say that sleep-deprived drivers may be as dangerous as drunk drivers!
- **Emotional balance.** Have you ever noticed that you're more irritable or easily upset when you're tired? That's because sleeping gives your brain the chance to regulate chemicals and hormones that impact your mental and emotional well-being. Without enough sleep, you can lose patience and have a hard time coping with the stresses of everyday life.
- **Weight control.** Getting enough sleep may help keep your weight steady. Lack of sleep can throw off hormones that tell you when you're hungry. Sometimes people who are sleep-deprived eat more because they receive "hunger signals" as a result.

- **Repair time.** Our bodies are amazing in that they can mend and rebuild themselves. While you're sleeping, your body heals from the effects of stress and harmful environmental substances like ultraviolet rays.

How much sleep do you need?

While everyone's needs are different, experts agree that most adults should have between seven and nine hours of sleep each night. During stressful times, you may find you need even more.

An easy way to find your ideal sleep amount is simply to experiment. See how you feel and function on more and less sleep. Then get into a routine of sleep that enhances your health and well-being.

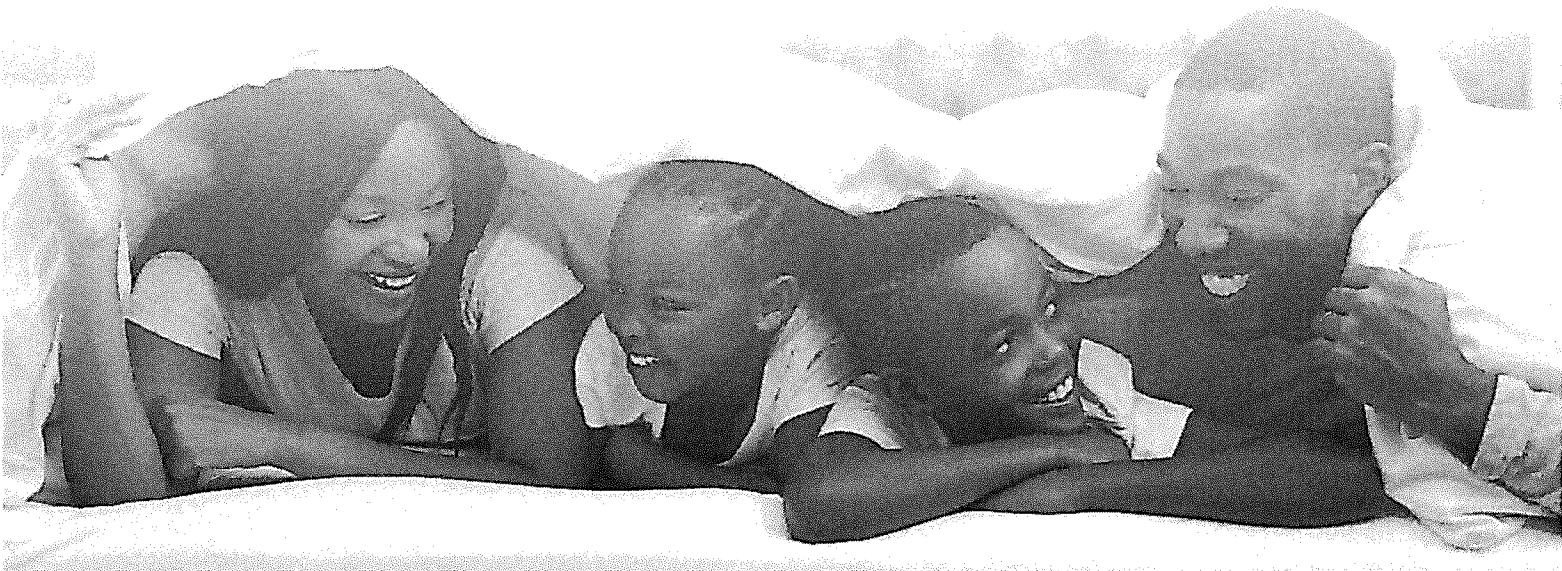
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