

New Ad Seeks to Help Sleep-Deprived Americans

HealthDay Online: May 23, 2014

By: Robert Preidt

Everyone knows that to be healthy you should eat right and exercise. **But now a new campaign is adding one more thing to that list: get a good night's sleep every night.**

"The urgency of our message cannot be overstated: **Sleep is a necessity, not a luxury, and the pursuit of healthy sleep should be one of our top priorities,**" Dr. Safwan Badr, president of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), said in an academy news release.



"Sufficient sleep is one of the three pillars of a healthy lifestyle -- as important as good nutrition and regular exercise. There's no avoiding it or catching up: You must sleep well to be well," Badr added.

The importance of sleep is the central message of the **"Sleep Well, Be Well" campaign**. The campaign is part of the National Healthy Sleep Awareness Project, a partnership between the AASM, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Sleep Research Society. The campaign is meant to raise awareness about the dangers of chronic lack of sleep and untreated sleep illness.

Sleep problems increase the risk of physical and mental health problems, accidents, injuries, disability and death, CDC experts warn.

According to Janet Croft, senior chronic disease epidemiologist in the CDC's division of population health, **"Poor sleep has a cumulative impact on nearly every key indicator of public health, including obesity, [high blood pressure] and diabetes. Healthy sleep is a vital sign of good health."**

A typical adult needs at least seven hours of sleep a night, but about 28 percent of American adults sleep six hours or less a night, according to the CDC. They suggest setting a regular bedtime that is early enough to provide you with a full night of sleep.

In addition, it helps to keep a regular sleep routine by going to bed at the same time each night and waking up at the same time every morning.

However, getting seven to nine hours of sleep a night isn't enough, the experts noted. You also require quality sleep. People should avoid things that can cause fitful, interrupted sleep.

Sleep Research Society President Janet Mullington explained that "alcohol, caffeine and some medications can negatively impact the quality of your sleep -- leaving you tossing, turning and waking up feeling unrefreshed despite the opportunity for enough sleep."

Another problem for many people -- and their partners -- is snoring. Snoring can be a sign of obstructive sleep apnea. People with this dangerous condition experience breathing interruptions many times through the night.

As many as 12 million to 18 million American adults have untreated sleep apnea. Treatment of the condition could improve their sleep, overall health and quality of life, the experts pointed out.

"Millions of people have an untreated sleep illness that prevents them from achieving healthy sleep," Badr said in the news release. "Effective treatment of a sleep problem can be life-changing, helping you to be healthier and happier."

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