

AMIAN HEALTH & WELLBEING

JULY 2017

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Get the most out of your sleep - How to engineer the perfect sleep

Sleep is an important resource that keeps you healthy, mentally sharp, and able to cope with stress more effectively. Here are some suggestions for getting a perfect night's sleep...

Six to eight hours a night seems to be the optimal amount of sleep for most adults, and too much or too little can have adverse effects on your health.

Sleep deprivation is such a chronic condition these days that you might not even realise you suffer from it. Research has now established that a sleep deficit can have serious, far-reaching effects on your health.

For example, interrupted or poor quality sleep can seriously impair your memory, affect your performance on physical or mental tasks, weaken your immune system, and wreak havoc on your weight.

So take a look at these tips to make sure you sleep well:

- ✓ Have a milky drink
- ✓ Go for a short walk
- ✓ Try to have a regular, unhurried bedtime routine
- ✓ Play relaxing music
- ✓ Make sure you've had some exercise during the day so you feel tired
- ✓ Avoid napping after 3pm
- ✓ Avoid caffeine, nicotine and large meals before bedtime
- ✓ Don't drink too much liquid – it may wake you with a full bladder!
- ✓ Relax before bed - watch a DVD, take a hot bath or try a relaxation exercise
- ✓ Create a good sleeping environment – get rid of distractions such as bright lights, an uncomfortable bed, or a TV, computer or mobile in the bedroom



The Effects of Caffeine

Caffeine - how much is too much?

When people are stressed, tired, or just need to keep going, they often turn to stimulants such as caffeine. Caffeine is used by millions of people every day to make them more alert, alleviate fatigue, stimulate the brain, and improve concentration and focus.

The stimulation is short-lived though and to regain it we drink another cup. This becomes a vicious circle and many people become addicted.

Up to 400 milligrams (mg) of caffeine a day appears to be safe for most healthy adults. That's roughly the amount of caffeine in 4 mugs of instant coffee or 10 cans of cola.

Caffeine in Food and Drink

- 1 mug of instant coffee: 100mg
- 1 mug of filter coffee: 140mg
- 1 mug of tea: 75mg
- 1 can of cola: 40mg
- 1 can of 'energy' drink: up to 80mg
- 1 x 50g bar of plain chocolate: up to 50mg
- 1 x 50g bar of milk chocolate: up to 25mg

So if you eat/drink...

- 1 bar of plain chocolate and 1 mug of filter coffee or
- 2 mugs of tea and 1 can of cola, or
- 1 mug of instant coffee and 1 can of energy drink

...you have reached almost 200mg of caffeine!

Although caffeine use may be safe for adults, it's not a good idea for children. And adolescents should limit themselves to no more than 100 mg of caffeine a day.

Heavy daily caffeine use, more than 500 to 600 mg a day, can cause unpleasant side effects such as insomnia, nervousness, restlessness, irritability, stomach upsets, fast heartbeat, and muscle tremors.

Caffeine and Sleep

Most adults need 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night. But caffeine can interfere with this much-needed sleep. Chronically losing sleep - whether from work, travel, stress or too much caffeine - results in sleep deprivation. Sleep loss is cumulative, and even small nightly decreases can add up and disturb your daytime alertness and performance.

Using caffeine to mask sleep deprivation can create an unwelcome cycle. For example, you may drink caffeinated beverages because you have trouble staying awake during the day. But the caffeine keeps you from falling asleep at night, shortening the length of time you sleep.

Curb your Caffeine Habit!

To change your caffeine habit, try these tips:

Keep tabs. Start paying attention to how much caffeine you're getting from foods and beverages. It may be more than you think. Read labels carefully. Even then, your estimate may be a little low because not all foods or drinks list caffeine.

Cut back. But do it gradually. For example, drink smaller cups of coffee or avoid drinking caffeinated beverages late in the day. This will help your body get used to the lower levels of caffeine and lessen potential withdrawal effects.

Go decaf. Most decaffeinated beverages look and taste the same as their caffeinated counterparts.

Shorten the brew time or go herbal. When making tea, brew it for less time. This cuts down on the caffeine content. Or choose herbal teas that don't contain caffeine.

Check the bottle. Some over-the-counter pain relievers contain caffeine, so look for caffeine-free pain relievers instead.



Keep your Brain Healthy

Steps you can take today...

Every 71 seconds, someone in the world develops Alzheimer's disease. Today, it is estimated that about 30 million people worldwide suffer from Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia - a collective name for progressive degenerative brain syndromes which affect memory, thinking, behaviour and emotion.

Dementia knows no social, economic, ethnic or geographical boundaries. Although each person will experience dementia in their own way, eventually those affected are unable to care for themselves and need help with all aspects of daily life.

Risk factors: Age and a strong family history of dementia are risk factors with a strong link to dementia. Excessive alcohol consumption, head injury, and risk factors for heart disease such as high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking and being overweight also seem to increase the risk of getting dementia.

There is increasing research evidence to suggest that having a healthy lifestyle may help to reduce an individual's risk of dementia.

Steps you can take: Whatever your age, there are steps you can take to keep your brain healthy:

1. Regular exercise According to the Alzheimer's Research & Prevention Foundation, physical exercise reduces your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease by 50 percent. Regular exercise can also slow further deterioration in those who have already started to develop cognitive problems.

2. Healthy diet Just like the rest of your body, your brain needs a nutritious diet to operate at its best. Focus on eating plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, lean protein, and healthy fats.

3. Mental stimulation Those who continue learning new things throughout life and challenging their brains are less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease and dementia, so make it a point to stay mentally active. Reading, engaging in a hobby such as playing bridge or chess, or doing crosswords and word puzzles may help to reduce risk.

4. Quality sleep Your brain needs regular, restful sleep in order to function at optimum capacity. Sleep deprivation not only leaves you cranky and tired, but impairs your ability to think, problem-solve, and process, store, and recall information. Deep, dreamy sleep is critical for memory formation and retention. If nightly sleep deprivation is slowing your thinking and affecting your mood, you may be at greater risk of developing symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. The vast majority of adults need at least 8 hours of sleep per night. Any less, and productivity and creativity suffers.

5. Stress management Stress that is chronic or severe takes a heavy toll on the brain, leading to shrinkage in a key memory area of the brain known as the hippocampus, hampering nerve cell growth, and increasing your risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia. So try to keep your stress levels in check.

6. An active social life Human beings are highly social creatures. We don't thrive in isolation, and neither do our brains. Studies show that the more connected we are, the better we fare on tests of memory and cognition. Staying socially active may even protect against Alzheimer's disease and dementia, so make your social life a priority.

The more you strengthen these areas of your daily life, the healthier and hardier your brain will be. When you lead a brain-healthy lifestyle, your brain will stay working stronger...longer.



How to be more Resilient

Tips for building your emotional resilience

Taking steps to look after your wellbeing can help you deal with pressure, and reduce the impact that stress has on your life. This is sometimes called developing emotional resilience – the ability to adapt and bounce back when something difficult happens in your life.

Build your resilience and coping skills with these tips:

Make some lifestyle changes

Here are some general changes that you can make to your lifestyle that could help you feel more able to cope with pressure and stressful situations:

- **Practise being straightforward and assertive** in communicating with others. If people are making unreasonable or unrealistic demands on you, be prepared to tell them how you feel and say no.
- **Use relaxation techniques.** You may already know what helps you relax, like having a bath, listening to music or taking your dog for a walk. If you know that a certain activity helps you feel more relaxed, make sure you set aside time to do it.
- **Develop your interests and hobbies.** Finding an activity that's completely different from the things causing you stress is a great way to get away from everyday pressures. If stress is making you feel lonely or isolated, shared hobbies can also be a good way to meet new people.
- **Make time for your friends.** When you've got a lot on this might seem hard, but it can help you feel more positive and less isolated. Chatting to friends about the things you find difficult can help you keep things in perspective - and you can do the same for them. Laughing and smiling with them will also produce hormones that help you to relax.
- **Find balance in your life.** You may find that one part of your life, such as your job or taking care of young children, is taking up almost all of your time and energy. Try making a decision to focus some of your energy on other parts of your life, like family, friends or hobbies. It's not easy, but this can help spread the weight of pressures in your life, and make everything feel lighter.

Look after your physical health

Taking steps to look after your physical health can help you manage stress and lessen the impact on your overall mental health.

- **Get good sleep.** Stress can make it difficult for you to sleep, and you may develop sleep problems. Being well-rested can increase your ability to deal with difficult situations.
- **Be more physically active.** Physical activity is important for reducing stress levels and preventing some of its damaging effects on the body (so long as you don't overdo it).
- **Eat healthily.** When you're stressed, it can be tempting to eat too much of the wrong kinds of food or to eat too little. But what you eat, and when you eat, can make a big difference to how well you feel.

Give yourself a break

Learning to be kinder to yourself in general can help you control the amount of pressure you feel in different situations, which can help you feel less stressed.

- **Reward yourself for achievements** – even small things like finishing a piece of work or making a decision. You could take a walk, read a book, treat yourself to food you enjoy, or simply tell yourself "well done".

- **Get a change of scenery.** You might want to go outside, go to a friend's house or go to a café for a break – even if it's just for a short time.
- **Take time off or have a holiday.** Time away from your normal routine can help you relax and feel refreshed. Even spending a day in a different place can help you feel more able to face stress.
- **Resolve conflicts**, if you can. Although this can sometimes be hard, speaking to a manager, colleague or family member about problems in your relationship with them can help you find ways to move forward.
- **Forgive yourself** when you make a mistake or don't achieve something you hoped for. Try to remember that nobody's perfect, and putting extra pressure on yourself doesn't help.

Use your support network

Remember that whatever you're going through that's causing you stress, you don't have to cope with it alone.

- **Friends and family.** Sometimes just telling the people close to you how you're feeling can make a big difference – and they might be able to help you out in other ways too.
- **Support at work**, contact **AMIAN** Counselling -The service is completely confidential and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The service is available to all employees. **Tel: 01204 418183 / 07872 423 088 Email: info@amianltd.co.uk**
- **Peer support.** Sometimes sharing your experiences with people who've been through something similar can help you feel less alone.

AMIAN Counselling and support service provides all Bolton University Staff with unbiased, impartial, independent, free advice and support and is a practical and positive way to help resolve concerns and difficulties. Not all staff accessing our service require counselling, some just need the assistance from someone outside of the situation to help explore possible options and provide advice, support and information.

The service is completely confidential and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The service is available to all employees.

If you have any further questions or wish to book an appointment, please do not hesitate to contact **AMIAN:**

Tel: 01204 418183 / 07872 423 088

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