



LIFESTYLE BALANCE

To Support Your IBS



Challenge 1 - 8-hours of Sleep

Sleep is essential for a person's health and wellbeing, according to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) and yet lack of good quality sleep is a serious problem which afflicts an alarming number of people. And this results in daytime sleepiness which can have serious consequences.

What sleep does for you

- Sleep helps your brain work properly. While you're sleeping, your brain is preparing for the next day. It's forming new pathways to help you learn and remember information. A good night's sleep improves learning.
- Sleep helps you pay attention, make decisions, and be creative.
- Sleep helps you control your emotions and behaviour, and to cope with change. Sleep deficiency has been linked to depression, suicide, and risk-taking behaviour.
- Sleep is involved in healing and repair of your heart and blood vessels. Thus keeping away heart disease, strokes etc.
- Sleep deficiency increases the risk of obesity because sleep helps maintain a healthy balance of the hormones that make you feel hungry (ghrelin) or full (leptin). When you don't get enough sleep, your level of ghrelin goes up and your level of leptin goes down. This makes you feel hungrier than when you're well-rested.
- Sleep affects how your body reacts to insulin, the hormone that controls your blood glucose (sugar) level. Sleep deficiency results in a higher than normal blood sugar level, which may increase your risk for diabetes.
- Sleep supports healthy growth and development. Children grow while they are asleep.
- Sleep helps build your immune system and fight common infections.



What happens if you don't get enough sleep?

According to psychologist and sleep expert David F. Dinges, Ph.D., of the



Division of Sleep and Chronobiology and Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, irritability, moodiness and disinhibition are some of the first signs a person experiences from lack of sleep. If a sleep-deprived person doesn't sleep after the initial signs, said Dinges, the person may then start to experience apathy, slowed speech and flattened emotional responses, impaired memory and an inability to be novel or multitask. As a person gets to the point of falling asleep, he or she will fall into micro sleeps (5-10 seconds) that cause lapses in attention, nod off while doing an activity like driving or reading and then finally experience hypnagogic hallucinations, the beginning of REM sleep. (Dinges, Sleep, Sleepiness and Performance, 1991)

How much sleep do you need?

Everyone's individual sleep needs vary. In general, most healthy adults are built for 16 hours of wakefulness and need an average of eight hours of sleep a night. However, some individuals are able to function without sleepiness or drowsiness after as little as six hours of sleep. Others can't perform at their peak unless they've slept ten hours.

What causes sleeping difficulties?

Apart from rarer physiological and psychological disorders that may be involved, the following can be causes:

- Stress, for example, school- or job-related pressures, a family or marriage problem or a serious illness or death in the family.
- Drinking alcohol or beverages containing caffeine in the afternoon or evening.
- Exercising close to bedtime.
- Following an irregular morning and night-time schedule.
- Working or studying right before getting into bed.
- Environmental factors such as a room that's too hot or cold, too noisy or too brightly lit.
- Interruptions from children or other family members.
- The comfort of your bed.



8 hours sleep a night

Your challenge:

Let's suppose you go to bed at 10.30pm and get up at 6.30am.

- No caffeine after 6.30pm
- No food or alcohol after 7.30pm
- At 9.30pm stop all heavy mental activity and relax (preferably no electronic devices)
- In your bedroom, minimize noise, light and excessive hot or cold temperatures
- No non-sleep activities in the bedroom - no reading, TV etc.
- Try and wake up without an alarm clock after a few days of routine (preferably in the weekend if you work).

