

## **How Important Sleep Really Is**

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Have you ever laid down in bed before, only to stay up late scrolling on your phone? This is extremely common in today's culture, especially with those who are in high school and college. Getting good sleep is one of the most valuable things you can do to help yourself in your life. Many people nowadays, more importantly those of us who are students, do not get enough sleep and commonly stay up late scrolling through social media or playing video games. Young people, like me and other college students do not really prioritize having good sleep, and this can lead to things such as worse academic performance, and lower average test scores overall. There is a lot of value to be had in getting good, consistent sleep, and there are many benefits such as better focus, better average test grades, and more energy throughout the day. There are many myths about sleep that I am going to look over, some of which being that your body naturally adapts to less sleep, how long you sleep is all that matters, and naps can make up for time missed sleeping. Sleep is how we recharge our bodies, and there are a lot of myths surrounding how sleep works and how much you need to feel well-rested.

The first myth that I would like to look at is the myth that your body naturally adapts to less sleep, and you can still feel rested with even five hours of sleep if your body is used to it. This is just simply wrong as it is necessary for your body to go through the 4 stages of sleep and spend enough time in each to complete a full cycle of sleep. Those 4 stages of sleep, according to the Oura Team (2025) are awake, light, deep, and REM sleep. Going through all 4 of these stages is essential to having a good night's rest. 5 hours of sleep simply just isn't enough to complete a full cycle. A lack of sleep over a span of days can really have an effect on your body. According to writer Eric Suni (2023), "Persistent sleep deprivation affects daytime performance, and can hinder decision making, memory, focus, and creativity. With time, insufficient sleep can wreak havoc on diverse aspects of health, including metabolism, the cardiovascular system, the immune system, hormone production, and mental health." So yes, this myth that your body

naturally adapts to less sleep is very false, and eventually, after a couple of days you will feel the effects of getting less sleep in your day to day life.

Another common myth that people believe regarding sleep is that the only thing that matters is the span of how long that you actually sleep for, and also that there aren't any negative effects of not getting enough sleep. While this may seem true at first, there are many more factors that go into getting a good night's sleep. One of the major factors is the quality of your sleep. Some things that could affect this are things such as waking up a lot during the night, which will fragment your sleep and lead to you not getting enough rest during some of the most important stages of the sleep cycle. There are many negative effects of not getting enough sleep, some of the more well known ones are, according to writer Watson, some of the negative effect of not sleeping enough include weakening of many systems that help the body function, including the nervous system, respiratory system, immune system, and the digestive system(2025). Also, according to Eric Suni, "Every person's goal should be to sleep enough hours and for those hours to include high quality, and uninterrupted sleep. Doing so will lead to you feeling a lot more refreshed when you wake up in the morning, due to being able to complete a full sleep cycle without interruption of it."

One other myth that people commonly believe is that naps can make up for sleeping time that may have been lost during the night due to not going to sleep at a good time or waking during the night. While naps may seem like they should make you feel more rested, it will not actually make up for the time of sleep you lost during the night, as your body will not have enough time to complete a cycle of sleep. Coming from personal experience, last year I used to frequently not get enough sleep at night and would usually stay up until 12 or 1 in the morning scrolling on my phone. This would lead to me taking a nap most days after I got home from school, which, according to this myth, I would just make up for the time I lost sleeping in these

naps that I would take. But that was not the case at all, as when I woke up from these naps, I would feel very groggy and still be just as tired as I was before I took the nap. This proves that naps are not sufficient in getting lost sleep back, and you are better off staying awake so that you will be more tired when it comes to the time that you actually want to go to bed at. That is an entire other problem with taking naps during the day, is that when you sleep during the day, it can make your body not feel ready to go to bed at its usual time. This can lead to an issue like mine where you keep taking naps to “make up” for time lost sleeping, when in reality you are only making your sleep schedule worse.

In addition, another myth which is believed by a lot of people is that if you aren't able to fall to sleep, you should stay in bed until you do. This is not true though, as while you may eventually fall asleep, if you are really having trouble going to sleep, according to writer Suni, you should instead get up for maybe like 15 to 20 minutes and do something which will make you more relaxed, such as read a book. (2023) This can really help you when it comes to getting to sleep at a good time, as it can be a good part of your nightly routine to read, as it will make you more relaxed, and you will also be stimulating your brain and building knowledge. One thing that kind of goes hand in hand with this is not using things like your phone or watching TV before bed, as this can heavily interfere with your body's production of melatonin, which is a hormone that regulates your sleeping schedules. Doing things like being on your phone before bed can really hurt you when it comes to wanting to get to sleep at a good time, as it can be difficult to fall asleep after looking at blue light. Also, due to the natural addictiveness of social media it can make it even more difficult to put the phone down. A method that I have found which has helped me with getting more sleep is putting my phone charger out in my living room. This makes me have to plug it in out there at night, which means that I don't have access to it when I am trying to fall asleep.

Another common myth is that going to bed at the same time at night everyday does not matter. This is far from the truth, as having a time in which you consistently go to bed is an integral part of having a really good sleep. When you do not have a set time that you typically go to bed at, it can lead to a lack of sleep and feeling tired when you wake up, despite still getting the recommended amount of sleep, that amount of sleep being 7 hours. This can also still lead to sleep deprivation, which, according to writer Eric Suni, "Sleep deprivation affects daytime performance, and can hinder decision-making, memory, focus, and creativity."(2023) Going to bed at different times every day also interferes with our body's internal clock, which is called the circadian rhythm. The circadian rhythm is our body's natural cycle or clock which regulates many of the functions of our body, one of the major functions of which being your sleep. Not having a consistent sleep pattern really interferes with the circadian rhythm and can lead to negative effects on things such as stress levels, focus, and your mood. When you go to bed at the same time consistently every day, it allows for your body to get used to that schedule and be able to fall asleep easier when it starts to get to around the time you go to sleep, and it also helps your body know when to wake up. Overall, contrary to the myth, going to bed at the same time is extremely important and will lead to better quality sleep, possible health benefits such as reducing the risk of various health issues, and an overall better physical and mental health.

Overall, getting a good night's sleep is one of the most beneficial things that you can do to help yourself live a better life. It is important to know how to get a good night's rest and not fall for any of these myths. To get a good sleep, be sure to go to bed at the same time every day, do not look at blue light before sleeping, if you can't fall asleep, consider reading a book instead to get more relaxed, and try not to take naps to make up for lost sleep. I would say that throughout the process of writing this essay, I have learned just how important it is to get good sleep, and how beneficial it can be for your overall health and life. Going forward, I am going to

try and prioritize my sleep, as after writing this essay I have realized just how important it is to get good and consistent sleep. A piece of advice I have for people is to just put that damn phone down and go to sleep.

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