How much sleep do I need each night?

Getting enough sleep provides improves your mood, helps maintain a healthy weight and may boost your immune system.

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Adequate sleep is one of the keys to good health. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends that adults should get at least seven hours of sleep a night. Children need even more: up to 16 hours for babies, 10 to 13 hours for children ages 3 to 5 years, nine to 12 hours for those ages 6 to 12 and eight to 10 hours for teenagers. People who are ill or undergoing medical treatment may need more than the recommended amount.

Getting a good night's sleep gives you enough energy for physical activity and mental acuity, improves your mood, helps maintain a healthy body weight and may boost your immune system. On the other hand, inadequate sleep is associated with a wide range of health problems, including obesity, diabetes, heart disease, mental health issues such as depression and diminished cognitive function. When it comes to driving, sleep deprivation is like being intoxicated: Sleepy drivers cause thousands of car accidents every year.

Experts estimate that a third of American adults don't get enough sleep. If this includes you, try to maintain a consistent bedtime—even on weekend and holidays—make sure the bedroom is quiet and dark, and avoid using electronic devices right before going to bed. Avoiding caffeine late in the day, exercising (but not right before bedtime) and practicing relaxation techniques can help you get to sleep. (Find more sleep tips here.) If you suffer from insomnia, ask your doctor for advice about how you can get more and better sleep.

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