

Facts about Getting Your ZZZZZs

By Kay Brickley

1 Benjamin Franklin wrote, “Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” Is that really true? Let’s find out some answers to questions about sleep.

Why Is Sleep Important?

2 Everyone sleeps, but why? Your body and brain need sleep to survive. When you are asleep, your body gets a chance to recharge. If you do not get enough rest, your body may not grow as well. You may get sick more often. Your brain needs to rest and recover, too. At night, it sorts through and stores information. It may even solve problems. If your brain does not get enough sleep, you may have problems remembering the next day. You may have trouble concentrating.

How Much Sleep Do You Need?

3 You may not always be ready to go to bed when your parents say it is bedtime. However, your parents are looking out for your best interests. Most kids between the ages of 5 and 12 need 10 or 11 hours of rest a night. Some kids can get by with a little less. Some kids need a few hours more. Have you ever felt tired or cranky the next day? Have you ever been unable to think clearly? Those are signs that you may need to get more sleep.

When Is the Best Time to Go to Bed?

4 When you should go to bed depends on when you have to get up. It also depends on how much rest your body needs to do its best. Let us say that you need 10 hours of sleep a night. If you have to wake up at 7:00 a.m. to get ready for school, count back 10 hours to set your bedtime. Therefore, 9:p.m. would be a

Sleep. (2011). In *Britannica Elementary Encyclopedia*. Accessed February 21, 2011. Retrieved from <http://school.eb.com/elementary/article?articleId=390257>

What sleep is and why All kids need it. (2011). Accessed February 21, 2011. Retrieved from http://kidshealth.org/kid/stay_healthy/body/not_tired.html

good bedtime for you. You should try to keep that bedtime even on the weekends, when you feel tempted to sleep in. This helps your body get into a routine.



Photograph courtesy of Tim Brickley

Setting an alarm helps you get where you need to be on time every day. If you set it early enough, you can hit the snooze button to get a few extra minutes of rest.

Who Needs the Most Sleep?

5 It may seem unfair that your parents get to stay up later than you do. But how much sleep you need changes during your lifetime. When you were a baby, you probably slept as many as 16 hours a day. The hours were made up of little naps throughout the day. When you were a toddler, you still snoozed during the day but slept longer at night. When you become a teenager, you will still need about 9 hours of sleep a night. Most teens stay awake longer and need to wake up later in order to feel rested. Your parents most likely need about 6–9 hours of sleep a night. When you are your grandparents’ age, you may sleep less at night but nap during the day.

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What Are the Stages of Sleep?

6 Not all of your sleep is the same. Your body goes through five different stages of sleep each night. You repeat Stages 2, 3, and 4 and REM over and over until you wake up in the morning. Look at the table to see what happens during each stage of sleep.

Stage 1	This stage is where you drift off to sleep. Your brain tells your body to relax. Your heart beats a little slower. Your body temperature drops a bit.
Stage 2	This is a stage of light sleep. It is easy to wake up still. A little noise can disturb you.
Stage 3	You are sleeping harder at this stage. It is not so easy to wake you up. You may even sleepwalk or talk in your sleep.
Stage 4	Here is the deepest stage of sleep. It is very hard to wake up in this stage. As in Stage 3, you may sleepwalk or talk in your sleep.
REM	REM stands for rapid eye movement. Under your closed eyelids, your eyes are moving very quickly back and forth in this stage. This is the stage where most dreams occur.

Where Do Dreams Come From?

7 Dreams can be very ordinary or extremely **bizarre**. No one knows for sure where our dreams come from. These nighttime adventures may be your brain's way of making **sense** of your daytime activities. They may be a way for your brain to store what is important — or a way to get **rid** of what is not important. Some scientists think that the ideas in dreams may come from what you are worried about. Sometimes you remember your dreams. Other

dreams **tend** to be forgotten quickly. How well you remember your dream has to do with what stage of sleep you are when you wake up.

Perhaps Benjamin Franklin was right after all. Going to bed early and getting enough sleep can make you healthier and wiser by giving your body and brain a much-deserved rest. How to achieve the wealthier part of his saying is still a bit of a mystery!

8

Glossary

Recharge—to fill with electricity again

Sorts—to put in order

Stores—to put away for later

Interests—best things for someone

Cranky—easy to make angry

Tempted—to make someone do something that may not be good for them

Bizarre—strange

Sense—to understand

Rid—to throw away

Tend—will most likely happen

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