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Importance of Restful Sleep by [Ted Begnoche](#)

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Restful sleep is vitally important to maintain good physical health. There are a number of things your body accomplishes during the time you spend sleeping, and when sleep is interrupted or avoided altogether there are consequences to be paid. Let's examine why sleep is so important to physical and even mental health.

Good sleep can be elusive for many people. For one reason or another, at some point we all struggle with getting the proper amount of restful sleep. Some of the reasons include stress, off shift work hours, excess alcohol consumption and even certain sleeping disorders.

It might seem like sleep is merely just hopping into bed and closing your eyes, but a lot goes into the making of a night of sleep. Your sack time is made up of 5 different stages, and each one has a specific function. Stage one is when your body is relaxing and still partly awake. It's easy for you to be awakened at this transition phase, which lasts only 5 to 10 minutes.

Stage 2 can last a little longer, perhaps 20 to 30 minutes, and it's during this stage that your body will begin to slip into sleep. Your heart rate will slow down during this phase. Stage 3 is next, and this stage is known as a transitional period between light sleep and deeper sleep.

Stage 4 is a period of deep sleep that can last for approximately 30 minutes. Your brain has slowed down quite a bit at this point and is producing delta waves. Next comes stage 5, or REM. This is the stage when most dreams occur, and your respiration and heart rate will increase as you go through this stage.

Your body will cycle through these stages 4 or 5 times per night, and each stage is an important part of the sleep process. Missing a couple of hours of sleep here and there will probably be no big deal, but if you miss enough sleep for an extended period of time, your body will begin to notice and react.

Not getting enough sleep at night has been shown to increase the risk of heart disease and stroke. It also can lead to higher blood pressure and increased cholesterol levels. Poor sleep can also increase your stress levels as your body struggles to deal with the lack of proper rest.

Lack of sleep can lead to the inability to concentrate and also make you very irritable. Numerous studies have shown that a person who is sleep-deprived is a hazard on the road as well. Driving while drowsy with lack of sleep can be as dangerous as driving under the influence of alcohol.

Getting the proper amount of restful sleep is important for maintaining good health. The amount of required sleep is different for each individual, but experts recommend between 7 and 8 hours per night for adults. It's been proven that people who get the right amount of sleep on a consistent basis lead healthier lives than those who don't.

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