

It's time to open our eyes... to the dangers of sleep deprivation

Courtesy of Raleigh Employee Assistance Program, Inc.



About **20% of adult Americans** report that at some time they have suffered a serious, chronic inability to sleep. For about 50% of the people with chronic insomnia, an underlying psychological problem may be involved. Sleep apnea is a medical problem that puts people at high risk for stroke and heart problems.

There are an **estimated 100,000 automobile accidents each year in the US** caused by lapses in attention or falling asleep at the wheel.

Negative Impacts in the Workplace: Surveys by the National Sleep Foundation report that over fifty percent (50%) of respondents admitted that they “drive drowsy”. Nineteen percent (19%) say they have actually fallen asleep while driving. **Forty percent (40%) say they get sleepy on the job and their work suffers at least a few days each month.** Seven percent (7%) say sleepiness on the job is a daily occurrence. Five percent (5%) report using stay-alert medications on the job.

Tips for getting a better night's REST...

Schedule vigorous exercise at least 3-4 hours before bedtime.

Avoid heavy meals and sugary snacks.

Set a regular bedtime and stick to it. If not totally sleepy, try going to bed and reading, listening to soft music, or meditating to fall asleep.

Spend a few minutes before bedtime focusing on positive feelings or accomplishments of the day.

If you wake up worrying about issues for “tomorrow”, try writing them down so you know you won't forget to take care of them, and then focus on falling back asleep.

Although a “nightcap” may help tense people relax and fall asleep, alcohol leads to fitful and non-refreshing sleep.

Caffeine and nicotine are both central nervous system stimulants producing fragmented and lighter sleep. Limit caffeine at least 4-8 hours before bedtime. If you smoke, gradually push back the time on your last smoke to longer before bedtime.

Anxiety, false beliefs about insomnia, and fear of not being able to get a good night's sleep may compound and prolong sleep difficulties. When experiencing physical problems or emotional stress...**talk things over with your doctor or a counselor** to resolve problems which may be interfering with sleep.