

MEMORY MOMENT

Many people often ask us "Is there any way to prevent dementia?" While there is a lot we still don't know about these diseases, research has shown that there are practical ways to reduce our risk of developing dementia as well as many other chronic diseases. Over the next several months, this article series will focus on various strategies for better health. This month, we focus on sleep.

SLEEP IS IMPORTANT IN REDUCING OUR RISK FOR DEMENTIA

World Sleep Day Slogan – “Regular Sleep, Healthy Future”

World Sleep Day is March 19, 2021. Good sleep is important at any age and can help keep you healthy and well in prevention of illnesses like dementia. Experts believe that when you sleep, your brain gets rid of things you don't need. When you don't get enough sleep, plaque-like substances build up. Sleep also helps you learn and store memories. And research shows you're more likely to have problems learning and storing memories if you have disturbed sleep.

Having good sleep and the right amount of sleep is important for these many other reasons according to medical experts at [healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com):

1. Poor sleep is linked to higher body weight.
2. Good sleepers tend to eat fewer calories.
3. Good sleep can improve concentration and productivity.
4. Good sleep can maximize athletic performance.
5. Poor sleepers have a greater risk for heart disease and stroke.
6. Sleep affects glucose metabolism and type 2 diabetes risk.
7. Poor sleep is linked to depression.
8. Good sleep improves your immune function.
9. Poor sleep is linked to increased inflammation.
10. Sleep affects emotions and social interactions.

Also, as we have previously discussed in this article, some sleep disorders have a tie to dementia. One of the sleep disorders is **Insomnia**, which is a lack of sleep that isn't caused by something else, like depression or drug use. Another is **Obstructed sleep apnea (OSA)** which is when the muscles in your throat relax when you sleep causing you to not breathe very well

causing your brain to not get enough oxygen. Researchers have also found that too little or too much sleep can cause cognitive decline. Seven to eight hours is the optimum sleep time.

Another interesting info about quantity and quality of sleep - there are two processes that regulate both the timing and length of sleep: Circadian regulation (process C) and homeostatic control (process S) according to worldsleepday.org. Circadian regulation refers to our internal clock, regulated by a part of our brain called the hypothalamus. This clock regulates and controls the 24-hour sleep-wake cycle by the influence of light and melatonin. Melatonin is produced in the absence of light or during evening hours and promotes sleep. In the presence of light, melatonin production ceases, signaling our brain that it is daytime and we need to wake up. Our behavior can override these natural signals with bright lights at night, delaying sleep.

Homeostatic control (process S) promotes sleep based on the previous amount of time that we spent awake. During wakefulness, our brain accumulates substances that promote sleep, and when we sleep these substances are cleared up and we feel alert again. If we take a nap in the afternoon, we deplete the sleep promoting substances and we are not able to fall asleep at a reasonable time in the evening.

World Sleep Society recommends the following 10 steps to achieve healthy sleep:

1. Fix a bedtime and an awakening time.
2. If you are in the habit of taking a nap, do not exceed 45 minutes of daytime sleep.
3. Avoid excessive alcohol ingestion 4 hours before bedtime and do not smoke.
4. Avoid caffeine 6 hours before bedtime.
5. Avoid heavy, spicy, or sugar foods 4 hours before bedtime.
6. Exercise regularly, but not right before bed.
7. Use comfortable bedding.
8. Find a comfortable temperature setting for sleeping and keep the room well ventilated.
9. Block out all distracting noise and eliminate as much light as possible.
10. Reserve the bed for sleep. Don't use the bed as an office or workroom.

In honor of #WorldSleepDay on March 19th, the Calm meditation app has designed the March Calendar to help you cultivate helpful sleep habits and get the rest you need. There are 31 ideas you may want to try to get a restful, healthy night's sleep! The link to the calendar is below. Here are a couple of our favorite tips!

- Do something to make your sleeping space feel more relaxing – fresh sheets, candles, plants, or a tidy up.
- If you're feeling tired, give yourself permission to go to bed even if it's early.
- Turn down the screen brightness on your phone (or computer) at night.

- Before bed, jot down any worries from your day in a notepad. Use it to empty middle-of-the-night thoughts on to paper.
- Curl up with a book instead of the TV or phone before bed.

https://www.calm.com/blog/march-2021-calm-calendar?utm_medium=email&utm_source=lifecycle&utm_campaign=newyear01172021

Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness (EAAA) is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit organization founded to provide education and support to all families, caregivers, and people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia in Effingham County and the surrounding area. For more information about Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness, check out their website at www.effinghamalz.org. If you are a caregiver & have specific questions or situations you would like information on, please feel free to call Shannon Nosbisch at 217-663-0010 or Amy Sobrino at 618-363-8372.