What keeps men from getting enough sleep?

For many men, sleep is at the bottom of their list of all that needs to be done in a day. Some men view sleep as wasted time. These wrong ideas about sleep keep men from tapping into the power of a well-rested mind and body.

Sleep is one of the pillars of health, along with exercise and nutrition. The more you invest in your sleep, the bigger return you will see in everything else that you do. Sleep is not wasted time. It is a time when your body is actively recharging itself and preparing for the next day. Sleeping well enables you to feel, think, and perform better. It allows you to maximize your time and your energy during the day.

Lack of awareness

Many men simply don’t realize that they need more sleep. They view sleepiness as a positive sign that they must be working hard. They get used to being tired, and they think that’s the way it’s supposed to be. They believe that they just must fight through it.

Every person has their own need for sleep. This need varies from one person to another. On average, most adults need seven to eight hours of sleep each night to feel alert and well-rested. Many men do not get this much sleep on a regular basis. As a result, they are not able to function at a maximum level of energy and concentration.

The following are signs that you are not getting enough sleep:

- You feel tired and lack energy during the day.
- You have a hard time paying attention.
- You are unmotivated and have trouble “getting going.”
- You are irritable, grouchy or lose your temper easily.
- You start to doze off when you are driving a car.

Full schedules

The list of people, places, and things that can exhaust a man’s time is endless. Family, work, friends, hobbies, and other obligations can quickly fill your day and push you to stay up later than you should. Sleep often isn't thought of as a priority when weighed against other responsibilities.

The key is to set priorities and balance your time. Take an honest look at your schedule to see if you are doing too much. Some things are more urgent than others. Not everything has to be done today, and not everything has to be done by you. Some things that are important can still be re-arranged so that you make better use of your time. Other things may need to be scaled back so you don’t do them as often or for so long. Still, other things that are not a high priority may need to be eliminated right now. You can always come back to them if you free up more time in your schedule down the road. As you are deciding which activities are important, make sure that sleeping is one of them. Put it near the top of your list, not at the bottom.
Life changes

Life is full of changes that can have a big impact on how you sleep. Some changes you expect, but others catch you by surprise. Negative changes will tend to disturb your sleep the most. But positive changes can affect you too. Along with the excitement, good changes bring new duties and stress that can keep you up at night. Examples of these kinds of changes include the following:

- Getting married
- Having a baby
- Starting a new job
- Moving

Examples of the negative changes that can greatly affect your sleep include the following:

- Losing a loved one
- Losing a job
- Getting divorced
- Being in an auto accident
- Having a major illness
- Having a lawsuit filed against you
- Making a bad investment

These changes can cause you to have feelings of depression. For many men, it begins so slowly that they never become aware that they are depressed. Over time, it can progress to the point where despair is just a normal part of their lives.

Depression can greatly disrupt the quality of your sleep. You might lie in bed tossing and turning late into the night. You also might sleep for a long time with no motivation to get out of bed. As poor sleep progresses, men stop taking care of their bodies in other ways. They stop eating and exercising regularly. They abuse alcohol and drugs. Overall, they may lose their usual interest and pleasure in the normal activities of daily life.

Men are more likely to keep these feelings of depression trapped inside. They don't often deal with them openly. In some cases, these feelings one day explode in a violent outburst. Depressed men often turn this violence on themselves. Statistics show that men are four times as likely as women to kill themselves.

Many men resist seeking help from a counselor. They fear that people will think something is “wrong” with them. They need to understand that these feelings are perfectly normal. While they are normal, they can also be hazardous to their health. If you are struggling with feelings of depression, then at least start by talking to a spouse, friend, doctor, or minister. Any of them can help you decide if you need to see a counselor. Don't fight this battle alone.
Bad habits

Men can develop habits that cause bad sleep. The use of alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine can all affect your sleep. You should avoid these substances in the afternoon and at night. Consuming them too close to your bedtime can keep you from sleeping well.

You may also eat big meals or exercise just before you go to bed. Both habits can also disturb your sleep. This can be hard to avoid if you have a lot going on in the evenings. If needed, you might want to eat a bigger meal at lunch and a smaller meal for dinner. To fit in your workout, perhaps you can try to exercise before work or on your lunch break.

Men also may keep an irregular sleep schedule. They go to bed and wake up at different times every day. This can disrupt your internal body clock and keep you from sleeping soundly. You should try to wake up at the same time every day. This includes weekends and holidays. This will help to keep your internal clock set at the right time. Try to avoid sleeping in later on the weekends to catch up on lost sleep. Instead, go to bed earlier at night when you are tired. You should also keep naps to less than one hour. Be sure to take them in the early afternoon so you are not wide awake at bedtime.

Medical conditions

Aside from sleep disorders, many medical conditions can keep you from being able to sleep well. Some of these are only temporary. A sprained ankle, the flu, or minor surgery will disrupt your sleep for a short while. Other problems may stay with you for the rest of your life. These illnesses and medical conditions become more common as you grow older.

The following are examples of medical conditions that can greatly disturb your sleep:

- Epilepsy
- Asthma and other respiratory diseases
- Heart disease
- Arthritis

Medications used to treat these and other problems can also hinder you from getting quality sleep. Some drugs might make you jittery and keep you up at night. Others will cause you to be very sleepy during the day. Discuss these medications with your doctor. Changing the dose or when you take the drug might make a big difference for you. Always be sure to tell your medical provider if you are having trouble falling asleep, staying asleep throughout the night, or are waking up not feeling refreshed in the morning.