5 Reasons Sleep is Important

Healthier Weight

- Poor and short sleep duration is linked to weight gain and obesity.
- Higher levels of Ghrelin (hormone that increases appetite) are produced and Leptin (hormone that suppresses appetite) is reduced.

Improved Mental Health

- Sleep is important for proper brain function!
- Sleep deprivation can cause impairment in thinking, concentration, productivity, and performance.
- Mental health disorders , such as depression, are strongly linked to poor sleep quality.
- Sleep loss can impact our emotions and social interactions with people.

Improved Immune System

- People that get less than 7 hours of sleep each night are 3x more likely to catch a cold.
- If prone to decreased immune function and colds, ensuring at least 8 hours of sleep per night can be helpful.

Less Risk For Disease

- Sleeping less than 7-8 hours per night is linked to increased risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Less sleep can affect blood sugar and reduce sensitivity to insulin which increase your risk for diabetes.
  - Less sleep is also linked to inflammation of the digestive tract, such as inflammatory bowel disease.

Better Physical Health

- Good quality sleep can enhance athletic and physical performance.
- In athletes, longer sleep was linked to improvement in speed and reaction time, while in women it helped to improve mobility.

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Tips to Improve Sleep

Eating Habits:

- Don't skip breakfast (or any meal, but especially breakfast).
- Be consistent with your eating patterns: if you always eat 3-5 meals per day, suddenly changing that may affect how well you sleep.
- If you never eat before bed, suddenly doing so can make it harder to fall asleep (and decrease sleep quality).
- This is especially true if you never eat meat before bed and randomly start to do so.

What to Eat:

- Melatonin is a substance that naturally occurs in our brains and in the food we eat. It helps us sleep!
- Foods high in melatonin: tart cherries, goji berries, almonds, and raspberries.
  - Get enough vitamin D in your daily diet: eat mushrooms! (It's also good to get some sun).
  - Vitamins B12 & B6 improve sleep quality and alertness: find them in fish, beef, turkey, eggs, starchy vegetables, pistachios, and some soy products.

What Not to Do:

- Don't get less than 6-8 hours of sleep per night.
- Exposing yourself to bright lights or loud noises within 2-3 hours of bedtime can disrupt melatonin regulation and disrupt sleep.
- Consuming large amounts of sugary foods and beverages can lower sleep quality.
- Avoid caffeine closer to bedtime, morning coffee is fine!

Helpful Tips:

- UNplug all electronics before bedtime. Try reading a book instead!
- Stick to a bedtime and wake up routine!
- Eat a light meal containing healthy carbohydrates before bed (high in fiber, low in sugar).
- At least 150 minutes of activity per week can help to improve sleep quality.
- These can all help improve the quality/duration of sleep + make it easier to fall asleep.