

Vitamin Zzz - Sleep your Way to Wellbeing

The length and quality of sleep can impact all other aspects of wellbeing. Understanding why people need to sleep and the impact quality of sleep has on overall wellbeing is a conversation that can benefit staff and students. The school leadership team can raise awareness of the benefits of sleep and support staff and students through education, ensuring the school setting supports a healthy sleep hygiene routine.



*'We are such stuff as
dreams are made on,
and our little life is
rounded with a sleep.'*
 Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Sleep experts (Adams et al. 2016; Huffington 2018; Walker 2017) claim sleep can impact:

- healthy weight management
- the onset of type two diabetes and cancer
- heart health and brain health
- energy levels and the immune system
- creativity and resilience
- capacity to create memories and make links to enhance learning.

Adequate sleep is measured by the length and quality of sleep a person has each night. Recent research (Adams et al. 2016) highlights that inadequate sleep is common across all age groups, with 33-45% of Australian adults having inadequate sleep. Stimulants such as caffeine, alcohol and nicotine, and the use of screen-based equipment before bedtime have a detrimental effect on sleep. Stress and recurring negative thoughts can also impact sleep quality.

The Australian Centre for Education in Sleep (2008) provides useful educational programs and online resources. Staff and students can learn about sleep, including how much sleep they need at different ages, and how their unique body clock works. For example, 'early birds' and 'night owls' naturally have a different body clock (Walker 2017). By keeping a journal over a period of time, individuals can monitor when they are most energised, when they need to schedule in sleep, and how to positively impact the quality of sleep.

'35-40% of children and adolescents experience some form of sleep problem during their development. Sleep problems can be:

- intrinsic (come from the inside) and include nightmares, night terrors, bed wetting and snoring

- extrinsic (come from the outside) such as bedtime reluctance, anxiety related insomnia, inability to fall asleep alone or environmental and social problems that get in the way of sleep.' (Australian Centre for Education in Sleep 2008).

Sleep hygiene is the routine a person engages in to ensure a replenishing night's sleep. For staff and students this may include:

During the day:

- going out into the sun in the morning
- exercising - ideally in the morning or before the evening meal
- hydrating - water and non-stimulants such as herbal teas
- managing workload and stress levels
- ensuring healthy food options.

The bedroom:

- ensuring the bedroom is clutter and work free so the brain recognises it as a place to relax
- ensuring the bed and pillow are supportive
- trying to use a relaxing scent such as lavender.

Before bed:

- avoiding screens 1-2 hours before bed
- adjusting the bedroom temperature to 18°C - the body's core temperature needs to lower to this in order to sleep
- relaxing/meditating - for example, the 'Smiling Minds' app, read, listen to music, enjoy a warm bath or shower
- reducing distracting sounds using 'white noise' or ear plugs.

'Scientists have discovered a revolutionary new treatment that makes you live longer. It enhances your memory and makes you more creative... It lowers your risk of heart attack and stroke, not to mention diabetes. You'll even feel happier, less depressed, and less anxious. Are you interested?'

Matthew Walker



Disrupted sleep:

- if awake for more than 20-30 minutes try going into another room
- doing something that keeps the mind neutral
- revisiting successful parts of the sleep hygiene routine, such as a warm drink, reading quietly etc
- keeping a pad and pencil handy to write down any thoughts to review in the morning
- if disrupted sleep continues seek medical advice.

Sleep is one of the most significant influences on a person's wellbeing and the capacity for him/her to be creative, responsive and productive in the work setting, and personal life. Educating staff and students about why sleep is important, the recommended hours of sleep, and how to achieve a quality night's sleep will ensure they have the information and tools to make positive personal wellbeing choices.

Age	Recommended Sleep Duration
0-3 months (newborns)	14-17 hours
4-11 months (infants)	12-15 hours
1-2 years (toddlers)	11-14 hours
6-13 (school-aged)	10-13 hours
14-17 (Teenagers)	9-11 hours
18-25 (young adults)	8-10 hours
26-64 (adults)	7-9 hours
64+ (older adults)	7-8 hours

The above sleep duration recommendations are recommendations by Australian Sleep Foundation (2011)

Key Points

- Inform staff and students about the impact of stimulants, and the use of screen-based equipment on sleep.
- Schedule sleep and sleep hygiene routine into the day alongside other wellbeing and work priorities.
- Promote the benefits of time outdoors and exercise in the morning, and provide healthy food and hydration options.
- Ensure workload and stress levels are managed by providing ongoing support for staff and students.

References

Adams, R, Appleton, S, Taylor, A, McEvoy, D & Antic, N 2016, *Report to the Sleep Health Foundation 2016 Sleep Health Survey of Australian Adults*, Sleep Health Foundation, The University of Adelaide, The Adelaide Institute for Sleep Health, viewed 1 February 2018, <<https://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/pdfs/surveys/SleepHealthFoundation-Survey.pdf>>.

Australian Education Centre for Sleep 2008, viewed 1 February 2018, <<http://www.sleepeducation.net.au/products.php>>.

Huffington, A 2018, *The sleep revolution: Transforming your life, one night at a time*, Arianna Huffington: Books, viewed 1 February 2018, <<http://ariannahuffington.com/books/the-sleep-revolution-tr/the-sleep-revolution-hc>>.

Sleep Health Foundation 2011, 'How do our sleep needs change with age?', *Sleep Health Foundation*, viewed 1 February 2018, <<https://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/fact-sheets-a-z/230-sleep-needs-across-the-lifespan.html>>.

Walker, M 2017, *Why we sleep: Unlocking the power of sleep and dreams*, Scribner, New York.

Resources

Smiling Mind app, <<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app/>>