



How much sleep do you really need?



Many Australians are suffering from fatigue and exhaustion on a daily basis due to inadequate or ineffective sleep. Sleep is essential for good health by refreshing the mind, repairing the body, and restoring your physical and mental health.



The body's internal clock regulates when and how we sleep depending on the amount of light around us. When the sun sets, your brain releases hormones to make you sleepy. In the morning, exposure to daylight suppresses these hormones and releases brain chemicals to keep you awake.



Lack of sleep can cause fatigue, poor concentration and memory, mood disturbances, impaired judgement and reaction time, and poor physical coordination.



Common causes of sleep deprivation are parenthood, shiftwork, travel across time zones, illness, poor sleeping habits, some medications, and the internet.

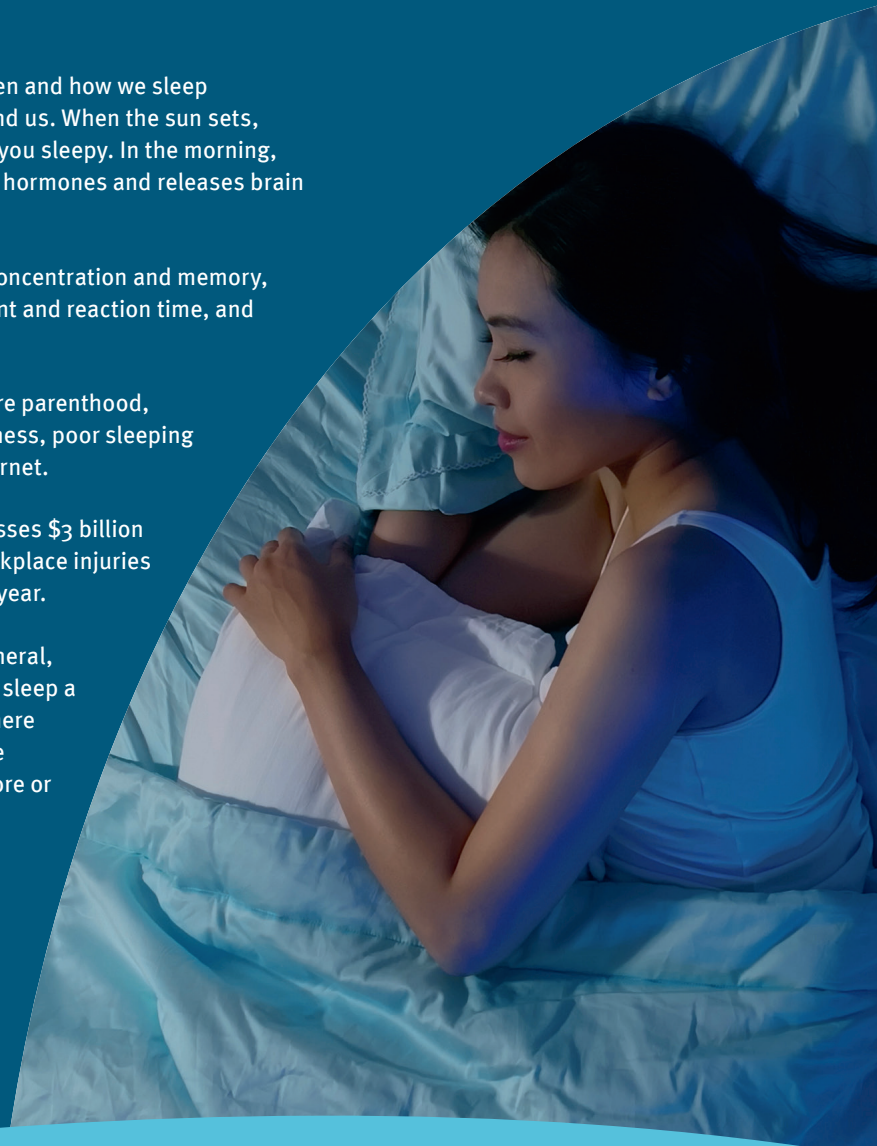
Sleep problems cost Australian businesses \$3 billion annually and cause 10,000 serious workplace injuries and 25,000 serious road crashes each year.



So, how much sleep do we need? In general, teenagers require between 9-10 hours' sleep a night and adults between 7-9 hours. There is a very small percentage (3-6%) of the population that genetically requires more or less sleep.



Healthy sleep habits are essential for maintaining overall health, and can make a big difference to your mood, concentration, memory, and quality of life.



Top tips for a better night's sleep.



1. Have a regular sleep pattern

Try to go to bed at the same time every night and get up at the same time every morning, even on weekends, holidays, and days off. Being consistent reinforces your body's sleep-wake cycle and helps promote better sleep.

2. Make sure the bedroom is comfortable

Create a room that is ideal for sleeping. Often, this means cool, dark, and quiet. Your mattress and pillow can contribute to better sleep, too. Since the features of good bedding are subjective, choose what feels most comfortable to you. If you have children or pets, try to set limits on how often they sleep with you.

3. Wind down and relax

Do the same thing each night to tell your body it's time to wind down and find a relaxation technique that works for you. This might include taking a warm bath or shower, reading a book, or listening to music. Relaxing activities can promote better sleep by easing the transition between wakefulness and drowsiness. Television, computers, and other distractions can interfere with your sleep.

4. Pay attention to what you eat and drink

Try to not go to bed either hungry or too full. Your discomfort might keep you up. Also limit how much you drink before bed, to prevent disruptive middle-of-the-night trips to the toilet. Whilst alcohol may help you get to sleep, it can disrupt your sleep. Caffeine (tea, coffee, and soft drinks) and the nicotine in cigarettes should also be avoided as they are stimulants that can keep you awake.

5. If you are struggling to sleep

Sleep is not something that you can force. If you are not asleep within 20 minutes of going to bed you should get up, go to a darkened room and sit quietly. Do not have screen time (e.g. television, smartphone and computer) or anything to eat or drink. When you feel tired and sleepy again, go back to bed. This helps your mind link bed with sleep.

6. You may need professional help

If you have persistent problems with mood, restlessness in bed, severe snoring, or waking up unrefreshed despite what should be an adequate length of sleep, make sure you see a doctor.

Sleep Awareness Week is 14 -20 March, coinciding with World Sleep Day on 19 March. Now is a great time focus on your sleep and prioritise your own wellbeing.

For more information, visit sleephealthfoundation.org.au

Orange, fennel & rocket salad

Refreshing side dish, perfect for warm weather. This fresh, fruity salad combines peppery rocket leaves, tangy citrus and a punchy mustard dressing for a full-flavoured side dish, which matches perfectly with fish or chicken.

Ingredients

- ▶ 1 x fennel bulb, thinly sliced
- ▶ 2 x large oranges, segmented with skin removed
- ▶ 1 x small red onion, thinly sliced
- ▶ 2 x handfuls rocket
- ▶ 1 x tbsp olive oil
- ▶ 1 x tbsp wholegrain mustard

Method

- ▶ Using a mandolin or a sharp knife, cut the fennel into thin slices.
- ▶ Remove the skin of the oranges with a knife and gently cut out the segments.
- ▶ Do this over a bowl to catch all the juice for the dressing. Squeeze any excess from the oranges after they have been segmented.
- ▶ Thinly slice the red onion and tip into a bowl with the fennel, orange segments and rocket leaves.
- ▶ To make the dressing, combine the juice from the oranges with the olive oil and mustard.
- ▶ Drizzle over the salad and serve. Enjoy!

