

## Getting Enough Sleep Is As Critical To Overall Health As Diet And Exercise

(NAPSA)—Like many Americans, you may spend hours at the gym, choose all the right foods and think you're in peak health—but you could be missing a vital part of the equation.

If you're not sleeping seven to nine hours each night, you're unlikely to achieve optimal health, according to the National Healthy Sleep Awareness Project, a collaboration of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Sleep Research Society (SRS). The group aims to promote awareness of the dangers of chronic sleep loss and untreated sleep illness to encourage measurable behavior changes.

"The urgency of our message cannot be overstated: Sleep is a necessity, not a luxury and the pursuit of healthy sleep should be one of our top priorities," says Dr. Safwan Badr, national spokesperson for the Healthy Sleep project. "Sufficient sleep is one of the three pillars of a healthy lifestyle—as important as good nutrition and regular exercise."

CDC data indicate that 28 percent of U.S. adults sleep six hours or less in a 24-hour period. Poor sleep increases the risk of physical and mental health problems, mortality, accidents, injuries and disability.

"Poor sleep has a cumulative impact on nearly every key indicator of public health, including obesity, hypertension and diabetes," says Janet B. Croft, PhD, senior chronic disease epidemiologist in CDC's Division of Population Health. "Healthy sleep is a vital sign of good health."

How do you know if you're getting enough sleep? The Healthy Sleep project recommends these tips:

**Quantity:** Get seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Most adults need at least seven hours of nightly sleep for optimal health and productivity. Set a regular bedtime that is early enough for you to get a full night of sleep. A recent CDC study linked too little sleep (six hours or less) with chronic diseases—including coronary heart disease, diabetes, anxiety and obesity.

**Quality:** Ensure that the quality of your sleep is good. Avoid anything that can lead to fitful, interrupted sleep.



**You'll not only wake up feeling refreshed after a good night's sleep, you may well be in better health.**

"It's important to understand that both the quality and quantity of sleep affect your health," said SRS President Janet Mullington, PhD. "Alcohol, caffeine and some medications can leave you tossing, turning and waking up feeling unrefreshed despite enough time in bed."

**Timing:** Follow a consistent schedule. Your body sleeps best at night, when it's dark, and functions best when you keep a regular bedtime. Try to go to bed at the same time each night and wake up at the same time every morning—even on weekends.

**Health:** Seek help for your sleep problems. Can't stop snoring? Besides being a nuisance to your bed partner, loud and frequent snoring can be a warning sign for obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). OSA is a dangerous, potentially life-threatening disease characterized by episodes of complete or partial airway obstruction during sleep. At least 25 million adults in the U.S. have OSA and treatment could mean better sleep and improved health.

"Millions of people have an untreated sleep illness that prevents them from getting the best sleep," says Badr. "Treating a sleep problem can be life-changing, helping you to be healthier and happier."

If you have difficulty falling or staying asleep or wake up feeling exhausted, speak with a board-certified sleep medicine physician, who has the training and expertise to diagnose and treat sleep illness.

For more information or to find a nearby sleep specialist at an AASM-accredited sleep center, visit [www.sleepeducation.org/healthy-sleep](http://www.sleepeducation.org/healthy-sleep).