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Need a good nap?

And are you getting enough of the right kind of sleep at night?

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Written by KENYA MCCULLUM

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Do you like to take a cat nap in the middle of the day? Most people, at some point, enjoy using a nap as a refreshing reset to their day — especially if they have a long day ahead of them and need a little spring in their step later.

Naps, however, do have a downside — particularly if you need to take a nap every day just to get through your day. If that is the case, your napping is no longer a refreshing reset for your body and may actually be indicative of a sleep problem that you need to address.

ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?

Generally speaking, it's best to get seven to eight hours of sleep per night in order to get through the day without getting tired. It can often be difficult to do this as we navigate our busy lives, but taking a nap is not an adequate substitute for getting enough sleep

Napping do's and don'ts

If there is nothing wrong with the quantity or the quality

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of the sleep you receive at night, taking a nap can be a good way to recharge your batteries. The following tips can help you get the most out of your naps.

Do set limits. Try to limit your naps to about 20 minutes—which is the ideal amount of time for you to feel refreshed. “It’s probably best to set a timer for 20 minutes because if you progress into deeper and deeper stages of sleep and someone wakes you up, it’s going to take you a while to get back to normal alertness,” said Bishop.

Don’t eat too close to nap time. Also avoid things that are designed to keep you alert, such as coffee, soda and tea.

Do choose the right environment. In order to get the best out of your nap, find a quiet, cool place where you will not be interrupted.

Don’t rely too much on naps. Although a good 20-minute nap here and there can be refreshing, you don’t want to make naps a regular part of your sleep regimen. “There are people who are severely sleep deprived because they only get four hours of sleep a night. If they take a short nap during the day, they feel a little refreshed and they do function little bit better,” said Huang. “That’s probably a good thing, but what would better would for them to get seven or eight hours of sleep every night.”

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in the first place.

“Napping is a second- or third-rate substitute for getting adequate sleep,” said Dr. David Huang, the medical director at the Tallahassee Memorial Sleep Center. “It’s better to get adequate sleep, which is seven or eight hours of sleep every night.”

ARE YOU GETTING QUALITY SLEEP?

If you are getting enough sleep each night, but you still need a nap to get through the day, you should then think about the quality of the sleep you’re getting. The following are some common problems that may impact your quality of sleep.

DISTRACTIONS. Do you have a TV in your bedroom? Your laptop? Your phone? Any other distractions that can keep you from falling asleep? If so, you may be sabotaging your ability to get a good night’s sleep.

“Those kinds of things are not conducive to sleep. You need to pretty much use the bedroom for sleep and for sex, and that’s it, but a lot of people eat in bed, get on their laptop in bed and watch TV in bed,” said Darrell Bishop, program director at HealthSouth Sleep Disorder Center. But what if you need the TV or radio to fall asleep? You may not realize it, but those devices may actually be causing your sleep to become fragmented because of the changes in brightness on the television or the fluctuations in volume that regularly

occur on both radio and television.

SLEEP APNEA. Does your partner tell you that you snore loudly or you appear to stop breathing at night? You may have sleep apnea, which occurs when your airways get obstructed throughout the night. People with sleep apnea tend to be sleep deprived and fatigued during the day, and they may also have difficulty with their concentration and memory.

RESTLESS LEG SYNDROME. Restless leg syndrome occurs when you wake up at night because of jerking and tingling sensations in the legs. Similar to sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome can interfere with the ability to get a good night’s sleep and can lead to daytime fatigue.

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- Taste
- Nightlife
- Calendar
- Movies
- TV Listings
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- Kati Schardl
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- Zing!
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