



ACTIVITY: Sleep!

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to share information about:

- The importance of sleep
- The consequences of not getting enough sleep
- How to improve your sleep habits

ESTIMATED TIME
5-10 minutes

**No materials
needed**

Background

Do you ever stay up late just to get a few more things knocked off your to-do list? Or because it's the only time the house is quiet and you just need some "me time"? It's common to think that by giving up an hour or so of sleep we can be more productive or gain some much needed time for self-care. In reality, we are often sabotaging ourselves and creating a vicious cycle, as lack of sleep can make us less productive overall and leads to poor health.

There's a growing body of research that warns us of the dangers of lack of sleep. Most studies consider lack of sleep to be less than 6-7 hours per night. Research has shown that lack of sleep is associated with:

- Weight gain
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure and heart disease
- Depression, anxiety, and mental distress
- Decreased life expectancy
- Decreased cognitive function and performance

Experts recommend adults get 7-9 hours of sleep per night. We know this varies by person – not everyone needs the same amount of sleep. So how do you know if you're getting enough sleep?

It's actually pretty simple. Do you frequently feel tired during the day? While its normal to have an ebb and flow in your energy level during the day, if you find yourself frequently feeling lethargic, constantly yawning, and having difficulty staying awake while sitting still (during meetings, watching TV, etc.), your body is letting you know you need more sleep!

Activity

Have a discussion or share information with your team about the importance of sleep.

- If you have time for a discussion during a team meeting or skills day, use the information on page 1 (and the sources listed below) to start the conversation.
- If you have daily huddles, start asking team members how much sleep they got the night before. Invite them to notice how they feel during the day based on the amount of sleep they got. How's their energy level? Is problem-solving and critical thinking easy today or do they feel foggy or slow? How is their mood? Do they feel optimistic or pessimistic? Encourage them just to notice these things, not to judge themselves.
- If your work flow doesn't allow for discussions or huddles, consider creating a flyer with some bullet points and maybe a few reflection questions to post in an easily viewed area. Create – or search online for- an eye-catching infographic on the benefits of sleep and/or the risks of sleep deprivation.

Discussion Questions/ Key Points

- How much importance do you place on getting enough sleep?
- Do you usually get a good night's sleep? Why or why not?
- Does learning about the negative effects of sleep deprivation make you feel differently about your sleep habits?
- What could you do to ensure that you get enough sleep most nights?

The Work We Do While We Sleep by Maria Konnikova. The New Yorker.

<https://www.newyorker.com/science/maria-konnikova/why-we-sleep>

Sleep should be prescribed: What those late nights out could be costing you by Rachel Cooke. The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/sep/24/why-lack-of-sleep-health-worst-enemy-matthew-walker-why-we-sleep>

Healthy Sleep. Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School and WGBH Educational Foundation

<http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters>