

Snooze or lose

For 92.5% of workers, an afternoon nap increases their productivity, and their creativity and problem solving skill. (Dr. William Anthony)

Sometimes you can sit at your desk and your mind is like jello. It just sits there. Time is passing, and you're unable to think. You're awake, but non-productive. But after a good nap, you're alert again. Your mind snaps into action and you can get more done in less time. So the time you spent napping is less than the time you would have wasted being awake, and you've been productive, it's a double-bonus."

Napping was natural, and our industrial age is short-sited in abolishing it. The siesta was practiced for thousands of years and is based on common-sense. Every other animal on the planet naps and humans have not evolved past this basic need. People are not getting nearly enough sleep at night, and it's causing them to be less effective at work, not to mention the health problems (which also lead to increased costs for business).

In the past, 20th century companies have only counted numbers, not sheep thinking napping on the job would cost them money. The modern day work system is not designed around the actual physical needs of our bodies. Coffee breaks yes, napping no or the artificial stimulant vs. real rejuvenation?

Would integration of a naptime as a new part of the workday be beneficial? "Morning" people probably need their nap around noon. "Night" people probably need it around three or four in the afternoon.

The art of napping at work was conducted by some of history's most important figures, including Napoleon, President Kennedy, Winston Churchill, Thomas Edison (and many more) were all productive nappers. Dr. William Anthony's new book, the "*seven habits of highly effective workplace nappers*," identifies some worker groups that are already employing productivity napping. Pilots, sales people, firefighters, the military, shift workers, truckers, etc. are finally going public about the benefits of napping to energize, focus and enhance job performance.

While many companies have not realized the power of napping, Dr. Anthony say, "However, there are a few companies that are nap friendly and we will provide examples of how some firms are trying to make it easier for employees to nap. Nap tents, nap rooms, and what we somnolently call "napnasiums" are finding their way into some companies. The CEO of one company currently has architects designing nap lounges into two new facilities that his very successful and expanding company is building."



Sleep and its function.

1. Sleep is not a time when your body and brain shut down for rest and relaxation: Although it is a time when your body rests and restores its energy levels, sleep is an active state that affects both your physical and mental well-being. Adequate restful sleep is critical to good health. Insufficient restful sleep can result in various mental and physical health problems.
2. If you regularly doze off unintentionally during the day, you may need more than just a good night's sleep.
3. If you snore loudly and persistently at night and are sleepy during the day, you may have a sleep disorder: Persistent loud snoring at night and daytime sleepiness are the main symptoms of a common and serious sleep disorder, sleep apnea. Another symptom is frequent long pauses in breathing during sleep, followed by choking and gasping for breath. People with sleep apnea don't get enough restful sleep, and their daytime performance is often seriously affected. Sleep apnea may also lead to hypertension, heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. However, it can be treated, and the sleep apnea patient can live a normal life.
4. Opening the car window or turning the radio up will not arouse a driver briefly, and won't keep that person alert behind the wheel. Even mild drowsiness is enough to reduce concentration and reaction time. The sleep-deprived driver may nod off for a couple of seconds at a time without even knowing it.
5. Narcolepsy is a sleep disorder marked by "sleep attacks". People with narcolepsy fall asleep uncontrollably, at any time of the day, in all types of situations, regardless of the amount or quality of sleep they've had the night before. Narcolepsy is characterized by these "sleep attacks," as well as by daytime sleepiness, episodes of muscle weakness or paralysis, and disrupted nighttime sleep. Although there is no known cure, medications and behavioral treatments can control symptoms, and people with narcolepsy can live normal lives.
6. Worry is not the primary cause of insomnia. Insomnia has many different causes, including physical and mental conditions and stress. Insomnia is the perception that you don't get enough sleep because you can't fall asleep or stay asleep or get back to sleep once you've awakened during the night. It affects people of all ages, usually for just an occasional night or two, but sometimes for weeks, months, or even years. Because insomnia can become a chronic problem, it is important to get it diagnosed and treated if it persists for more than a month.



7. One cause of not getting enough sleep is restless legs syndrome: Restless legs syndrome (RLS) is a medical condition distinguished by tingling sensations in the legs -- and sometimes the arms -- while sitting or lying still, especially at bedtime. The person with RLS needs to constantly stretch or move the legs to try to relieve these uncomfortable or painful symptoms. As a result, he or she has difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep and usually feels extremely sleepy and unable to function fully during the day. Good sleep habits and medication can help those with RLS.
8. The body does not have a natural ability to adjust to different sleep schedules such as working different shifts or traveling through multiple time zones quickly: The human body's biological clock programs each person to feel sleepy during the nighttime hours and to be active during the daylight hours. So people who work the night shift and try to sleep during the day are constantly fighting their biological clocks. This puts them at a risk of error and accident at work and of disturbed sleep. The same is true for people who travel through multiple time zones quickly; they get "jet lag" because they cannot maintain a regular sleep-wake schedule. Sleeping during the day in a dark, quiet bedroom and getting exposure to sufficient bright light at the right time can help improve daytime alertness.
9. People do not need less sleep as they grow older. As we get older, we don't need less sleep, but we often get less sleep. That's because our ability to sleep for long periods of time and to get into the deep restful stages of sleep decreases with age. Older people have more fragile sleep and are more easily disturbed by light, noise, and pain. They also may have medical conditions that contribute to sleep problems. Going to bed at the same time every night and getting up at the same time every morning, getting exposure to natural outdoor light during the day, and sleeping in a cool, dark, quiet place at night may help.
10. More people doze off at the wheel of a car in the early morning or midafternoon than in the evening. Our bodies are programmed by our biological clock to experience two natural periods of sleepiness during the 24-hour day, regardless of the amount of sleep we've had in the previous 24-hours. The primary period is between about midnight and 7:00 a.m. A second period of less intense sleepiness is in the midafternoon, between about 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. This means that we are more at risk of falling asleep at the wheel at these times than in the evening -- especially if we haven't been getting enough sleep.

Many people doze off unintentionally during the day despite getting their usual night of sleep. This could be a sign of a sleep disorder. Approximately 40 million Americans suffer from sleep disorders, including obstructive sleep apnea, insomnia, narcolepsy, and restless legs syndrome. An untreated sleep disorder can reduce your daytime productivity, increase your risk of accidents, and put you at risk for illness and even early death



11. The average teenager needs more than about 8 hours of sleep every night. Most teenagers need more than their younger siblings and more than adults, about 9 hours of sleep per night.
12. You can't make up for lost sleep by drinking caffeinated soft drinks or coffee. While caffeinated drinks such as soft drinks and coffee may assist you in staying awake in the short run, they cannot help you make up lost sleep.
13. Lack of sleep can affect performance in school, on the job, in sports, and can even make a difference in how you look. Sleep deprived people can have difficulties in paying attention and concentrating. Lack of sleep can also affect your appearance.
14. Teenagers just naturally want to go to bed late and get up late. Research has shown that the biological clocks of teenagers push them toward later bed times and later rising times.
15. Sleeping late on the weekends will not make up for lost sleep during the week: You may not be able to catch up on lost sleep in only one or two nights. It usually takes several nights of refreshing sleep to return your body to normal.

References

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- Dateline: IP Clinic, Marin County, California. Researchers
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- William A. Anthony, Ph.D author of *The Art of Napping at Work*.

