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# Sleep to Better Health

Are you bright-eyed and bushy-tailed today or beat down and just plain bushed? Being chronically tired to the point of exhaustion translates to decreased performance in nearly every physical and mental activity.

If we do not recharge our brains and rest our muscles, our body is not given the chance to fully recover from various activities.

Sleep plays a critical role in our health across immunity, metabolism, memory, learning and other vital functions.

## SLEEP & LEARNING

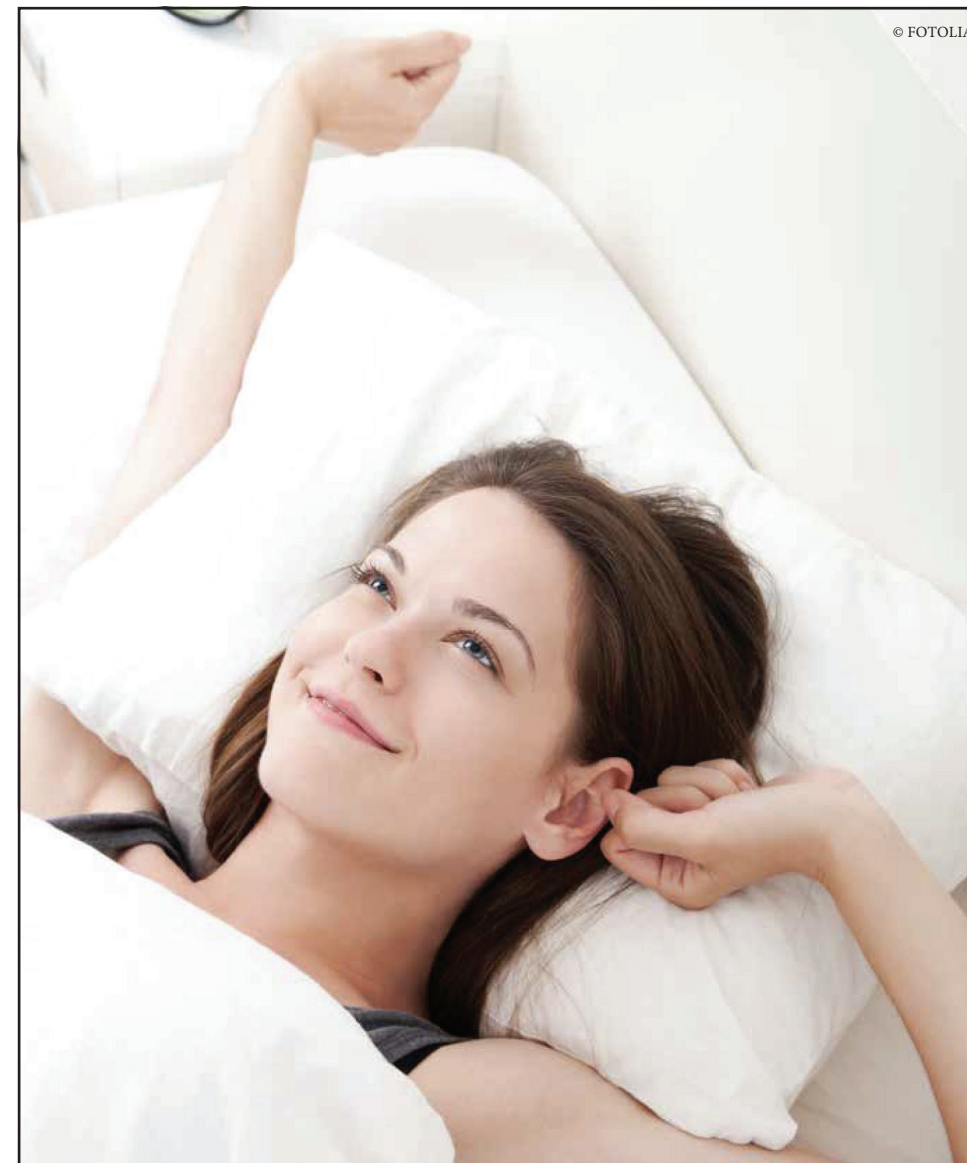
Researchers at the Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School are conducting studies that suggest various sleep stages are involved in the consolidation of different types of memories and that being sleep deprived reduces one's ability to learn.

You'd probably guess

that the better rested you are, the more likely you are to focus and learn new information. But what about after you learn? Slow-wave sleep, which is defined as deep, restorative sleep plays a significant role in processing and consolidating newly acquired information, according to Harvard's sleep researchers. REM sleep, on the other hand, is necessary for our ability to consolidate the memory of how to perform repetitive tasks.

## HOW TO GET MORE SLEEP

In today's 24/7 world of information-sharing, socializing and working, sleep is getting harder to come by. The fact is, our bodies still require an ample amount of sleep to most effectively get through the day. How much sleep depends on your age. A study by the National Sleep Foundation found that sleep



needs vary across populations. The National Sleep Foundation offers these tips for maximizing your mattress time:

- Choose one consistent bedtime and maintain it, even on the weekends;
- Avoid napping late in the afternoon if you want to catch your Zs at night;

- Daily exercise is beneficial, as long as it doesn't cut into your sleep time;
- Design a sleep-friendly room with the noise and darkness levels best suited to your personal sleep preferences; and
- Reach out to your physician if sleep deprivation is impacting your daily life.

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