

SLEEP

& YOUR BODY

We spend about one-third of our lives asleep—but this time is far from wasted.

A good night's sleep is restorative in every way.

1 LEARNING & MEMORY

As you sleep, your brain performs "memory consolidation," sending new information gathered during your waking hours to your long-term memory. Research shows that if you take a nap right after studying, chances are you'll do better on that big test.

2 DROWSINESS

An obvious result of poor sleep, drowsiness behind the wheel or at work can result in disaster and can affect your own personal safety and that of others around you.

3 IRRITABLE MOOD

Irritability and impatience are well-known symptoms of sleep deprivation. If you find that you can't focus at work or are too tired for activities that normally make you happy, you should take steps to catch more z's.

4 HEART HEALTH

Serious insomnia—when sleep is disrupted at least three nights a week for over a month—can lead to elevated stress levels, hypertension and an irregular heartbeat.

5 IMMUNE SYSTEM

Proper sleep recharges your immune system, enabling your body to fight off disease more efficiently. Long-term healthy sleep levels can even help fight off cancer and other serious diseases.

6 LOW BLOOD SUGAR

Sleep deprivation impairs the body's control of blood sugar, or glucose, levels, which can worsen symptoms of diabetes.

7 METABOLISM

If you feel sluggish after a sleepless night, your metabolism may be feeling it, too. Regular sleep deprivation can alter hormone levels, increasing hunger and causing weight gain.