

# Wellness Highlights

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## The Healthy Mind, Body, Spirit Menu

**Connecting**



**Sleeping**



**Playing**



**Reflecting**



**Moving**



**Relaxing**



**Eating**



Mind, Body, Spirit...



by Lisa Calhoun, Teacher Counsellor, Anglophone Districts North & East

### ***Sleep and Relaxation***

**Myth #1:** Sleep is not important. I can get by on just a few hours.

**Myth #2:** Insomnia is not a serious medical condition and has no consequences.

**Myth #3:** Watching TV in my bedroom and working on my laptop in bed helps me wind down and fall asleep.

**Myth #4:** Turning up the radio, opening the window, or turning on the air conditioner in the car are effective ways to stay awake when driving.

**Myth #5:** Alcohol or wine will help me fall asleep faster.

How you feel during your waking hours hinges greatly on how well you sleep. Similarly, the cure for sleep difficulties can often be found in your daily routine. Your sleep schedule, bedtime habits, and day-to-day lifestyle choices can make an enormous difference to the quality of your nightly rest. The following tips will help you optimize your sleep so you can be productive, mentally sharp, emotionally balanced, and full of energy all day long. Many of these tips will seem like common sense, but it is surprising how many of these important points are ignored by many of us.

Some tips to improve your sleep:

- Establish a regular bedtime and wake-time schedule and follow it every day, even on weekends.
- Create a consistent and relaxing bedtime routine-maybe a warm bath and soothing music.
- Make sure your bedroom is a comfortable temperature, well ventilated, dark and quiet.
- Invest in a comfortable mattress and pillows.
- Don't eat within two to three hours of bedtime.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco before going to sleep.
- Exercise regularly - a brisk walk or workout can improve your sleep.
- Only sleep and have sex in your bedroom -- nothing else.
- No television, computers, ipads, or iphones before bedtime - they suppress your melatonin production and stimulate your mind.
- Do not take your worries to bed.
- Practice relaxation techniques.

Poor sleep habits are among the most common problems encountered in our society. We stay up too late and get up too early. We interrupt our sleep with drugs, chemicals and work, and we over-stimulate ourselves with late-night activities such as television and electronic devices.

Physiologically, sleep is a complex process of restoration and renewal for the body - it is essential. People suffering from sleep disorders do not get adequate or restorative sleep, and sleep deprivation is associated with a number of both physical and emotional disturbances.

How much sleep does a person need? Adults need 7-9 hours on average.

What is the most common sleep disorder? Insomnia

Breathing pauses, gasps, shallow breaths, and airway collapse during sleep indicate what condition? Sleep Apnea

What are some complications of sleep deprivation? Memory problems, depression, a weakened immune system, and increased pain perception.

Sleep disorders and chronic sleep loss can put you at risk for developing which diseases and conditions? Heart disease, heart attack, heart failure, stroke, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

### ***Relaxation***

Relaxation is beneficial for everyone, but especially for those struggling with sleep. Practicing relaxation techniques before bed is a great way to wind down, calm the mind, and prepare for sleep. Some simple relaxation techniques include:

- Deep breathing. Close your eyes, and try taking deep, slow breaths, making each breath even deeper than the last.
- Progressive muscle relaxation. Starting with your toes, tense all the muscles as tightly as you can, then completely relax. Work your way up from your feet to the top of your head.
- Visualizing a peaceful, restful place. Close your eyes and imagine a place or activity that is calming and peaceful for you. Concentrate on how relaxed this place or activity makes you feel.

Relaxation breathing can be done at any time during the day when you are feeling stressed and need to get centered again. By concentrating on our breathing, it allows the rest of our body to relax itself. Deep breathing is a great way to relax the body and get everything into synchrony and ready for sleep.

Relaxing bedtime rituals to try

- Take a warm bath
- Listen to soft music
- Do some easy stretches
- Wind down with a favorite hobby
- Listen to relaxing books on CD or on your iPod
- Meditation

You need to practice relaxation almost daily to obtain significant benefits from it. The more consistently the relaxation is practiced, the greater the benefits for sleep, health, and daily life.

Try to allot ten to twenty minutes per day for the relaxation. Most people simply can't relax and quiet the mind in less time. As more experience is gained, relaxation occurs more quickly.

Practice relaxation in a comfortable position and in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed.

Experiment to find the time of day that works best for you. Then designate that time as regular relaxation time.