

## The Importance of Sleep

When we sleep well, we wake up feeling refreshed and alert for our daily activities. Sleep affects how we look, feel and perform on a daily basis, and can have a major impact on our overall quality of life. To get the most out of our sleep, both quality and quantity are important.

Sleep needs vary by the individual. The need for sleep is especially impacted by a person's lifestyle and health. Research suggests that healthy adults need about seven to eight hours of sleep a night of sleep.

Are you productive, healthy and happy on seven hours of sleep? Or does it take nine hours of quality ZZZ's to get you into high gear?

Far from being unproductive, the one-third of our life spent sleeping plays a direct role in how full, energetic and successful the other two-thirds of our life can be. Sweet dreams!

*Source: The National Sleep Foundation*



## Healthy Sleep Tips

- Stick to the same sleep and wake times, even on weekends.
- Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual.
- Unplug! Keep phones, computers, televisions and other electronic devices out of the bedroom.
- Exercise daily, but avoid vigorous activity right before bed.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, cigarettes and heavy meals in the evening.
- Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillows and keep your bedroom cool and dark.



**Visit [ExcellusBCBS.com/Health](http://ExcellusBCBS.com/Health) to learn more about sleep, as well as 6,000+ additional health topics.**

# Understanding Insomnia

According to the National Sleep Foundation, about 75 percent of adults report having at least one symptom of sleep problems a few nights per week.

Insomnia is defined as difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep. **Acute insomnia** is brief and often happens because of life circumstances (e.g., a project at work, receiving stressful news). Many people experience this type of sleep disruption, which tends to resolve itself without any treatment. **Chronic insomnia** occurs at least three nights per week and lasts at least three months.

Changes in the environment, unhealthy sleep habits, shift work, health conditions and some medications can contribute to a long-term pattern of insufficient sleep.

Those with chronic insomnia may benefit from treatment to help get back to healthy sleep patterns.

**Having sleep trouble?** After 20 minutes, get out of bed and do something relaxing, like reading until you feel sleepy.

**Too much on your mind?** Keep a notebook by your bed to write down troubling thoughts and deal with them in the morning. Learning how to mediate helps quiet your mind.

**Avoid sleeping pills** to minimize the risk of rebound insomnia, which can occur when you stop taking the medication.

## Test Your Sleep IQ

**1. Each night when you sleep, you move through several stages. How long does a complete sleep cycle take?**

- A. 30 minutes
- B. 90 to 110 minutes
- C. 3 hours
- D. 4 hours

**2. A sleep disorder called sleep apnea can prevent a person from getting the rest he or she needs. Sleep apnea also has been linked to which of these serious health risks?**

- A. Hypertension
- B. Heart attack
- C. Obesity
- D. All of the above

**3. Which of the following can help prevent snoring?**

- A. Losing weight
- B. Not smoking
- C. Sleeping on your side
- D. All of the above

**4. Which of these lifestyle factors has a significant effect on your sleep quality?**

- A. Smoking
- B. Exercise
- C. Drinking
- D. All of the above

**5. Which of these will help promote better sleep?**

- A. Exercising two hours before bedtime
- B. Reading or listening to music
- C. Changing bedtimes
- D. Having a late dinner



**Find more quizzes at**  
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Quizzes provided by Krames Staywell Custom Communications.

Quiz Answers: 1. B, 2.D, 3.D, 4 D, 5. B

## Start a Conversation About Your Care

Low back pain frequently sends people to their doctor. Many people think they need an X-ray to find out what is wrong. But is that necessary?

Excellus BlueCross BlueShield is teaming up with Consumer Reports on Choosing Wisely®, a nationwide initiative to reduce unnecessary health care services that have little or no proven benefit.

A 2012 report from the Institute of Medicine said that about 30 percent of health care spending was wasted on unnecessary services, excessive administrative costs, fraud and other problems.

Choosing Wisely encourages you and your doctor to share decision-making when it comes to your health care. It's not about denying necessary care, but is about promoting the right care at the right time.

Here are some questions to ask your doctor:

- Do I need this test or procedure?
- What are the risks?
- Are there simpler, safer options?
- What happens if I don't do anything?
- How much does it cost?

[Download a guide to help you know when to start a conversation with your doctor. \(PDF\)](#)

## Sweet Potato Fries

A little sweet, a little salty and a little healthy!

[Read or print the full recipe with instructions \(PDF\).](#)



**Do you have a healthy recipe that you'd like to share?** We may feature your recipe in an upcoming newsletter. [Email us your recipe.](#)

## Strengthen Your Back

In this month's episode, fitness expert Dr. Derek™ Alessi has exercises you can do at the gym or at home to strengthen your back and relieve lower back pain.

