



SWEET DREAMS ARE MADE OF THIS

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There's nothing like getting a good night's rest for one's health and well-being. Unfortunately, too few of us get enough sleep. Below, you'll find suggestions to help you make it through the night.

You've got the lumps in your pillow just right. You splurged on the 400-thread-count sheets. Your cat is curled up at the end of the bed, keeping your toes warm. And yet all you can do is lie there, staring at the ceiling, stressing about tomorrow's meeting or wondering how you're going to get Janie to ballet class without Robert being late for soccer. Or worse, you're lying there and counting all those silly old sheep.

For many Americans, this scene is all too common. "The number of people, young or old, who don't get the sleep they need is more than 100 million," says Janice Shock, R.EEGT/MBA – supervisor of sleep, epilepsy and neurophysiology at Medical City.

Unfortunately, missing those 40 winks can do more than just make you grumpy the next day. "Sleep allows our bodies to heal and rejuvenate," says Shock, "and a lack of sleep, or poor sleep, can be linked to everything from obesity to diabetes to heart disease."

Sleep disturbances can be potentially life threatening, such as Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA), in which individuals actually stop breathing for a few seconds throughout the night. This repetitive cessation in breathing can occur dozens to hundreds of times each night. Lack of sleep can also be fatal in other ways, such as an increase in car accidents. More

than 20 percent of American drivers have fallen asleep while at the wheel, resulting in 1,500 deaths each year.

But a good night's sleep doesn't have to be something you only dream about. We consulted the Medical City specialists and discovered some helpful tips that will have you sawing logs in no time.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT. Stick to a regular routine in which you get up and go to bed at approximately the same time every day. And don't overdo it on the weekends; sleeping in as little as an hour past your usual wake-up call can throw off your body rhythms.

DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK. The slightest hint of light in your bedroom can lower your body's melatonin levels and keep you up.

HALLOWED BE THY BED. Keep your sleep space sacred. That means no pets, no kids, no laptop, no TV, no wearing curlers to bed. In your bed should be just you and your favorite pair of PJs. Oh, and maybe your spouse.

DON'T JUST LIE THERE. If you don't doze off after 20 minutes or so, get up and do something else until you feel sleepy. Otherwise, you'll start to relate being in bed with struggling to fall asleep.

HIGH NOON. Limit your caffeine intake to 200 milligrams (the equivalent of two cups of coffee) a day. And avoid caffeine altogether after noon; it takes as long as 12 hours for caffeine to clear your system. ❖