Sleep

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We spend a third of our lives doing it! No doubt Benjamin Franklin said, "There will be sleeping enough in the grave" as well as "The sleeping fox catches no poultry" while Thomas Edison claimed it was a waste of time and Napoleon who was not a good sleeper, said "Six hours of sleep for a man, seven for a woman and eight for a fool". The Victorians regarded sleep as an indulgence to be frowned upon. Sleeping beyond eight hours a night was thought of as idleness or an all-too-adequate private income.

Randy Gardner, broke the world record in 1965 by going without sleep for 11 long days. After four days he started to hallucinate which was followed by a delusion where he thought he was a famous footballer, but by the end of his research he was doing quite well and was able to beat a scientist in a pinball game. On the other extreme, the Inuit or Eskimos, until the fifties, slept for 14 hours a day to keep up with the chilly Arctic nights compared to only six hours during the continuous summer lights. Today, having adapted a western style of living they maintain the seven or eight hours of sleep throughout the year.



Well, how important is sleep? This is a question that has managed to baffle many scientists across the globe, and has led to innumerable studies and researches. Regardless of all the analysis and surveys, we do know that sleep is a significant factor of our lives and we can hardly do without it. So what is sleep? Sleep is an anabolic or building process, which restores the body's energy supplies, both mental and physical, that has been exhausted during the day's work. It is like a daily tune up, when it does all the repair work for you. Sleep is vital to maintain normal levels of cognitive skills such as speech, memory, innovative and flexible thinking and most importantly, brain development.

A research conducted by EEDA (East of England Development Agency) found that some 30% of people have their best ideas in bed compared to just 11% who have them at their desk.

The amount of sleep a person needs depend on a variety of factors, including age. Children require about 16 hours of sleep, as the growth hormone is secreted during sleep, this hormone is important not only for kids but throughout adulthood for rebuilding tissues. Nine hours on average is said to be appropriate for teens and seven to eight hours for adults. Though some do fine with five hours or may require as much as ten hours of sleep every day. Napoleon, Florence Nightingale and Margaret Thatcher got on by four hours a night. Women in the first trimester may require much more sleep than usual.

Our society is fast shifting to 24 hours a day and seven days a week society and we are not sleeping as we used to. The youngsters especially are increasingly losing a good night's sleep on the internet, phones, e-mails, chats and other distractions of modern life. Some stay awake throughout the night to study or to meet deadlines for their assignments. Many believe that we can just get along fine without sleep or manipulate sleep whenever we wish to without facing any consequences. The president of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine says that it's just not true!

If you happen to believe that the time spent sleeping at night is a colossal waste of some precious hours, you need to think again. Being awake in the wee hours and not getting adequate amount of sleep runs counter to the body's internal clock, throwing a host of basic bodily functions out of sync. Lack of sleep disrupts