

Health Notes

Sleep 101: What Happens When We Sleep?

In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you, O lord, make me dwell in safety. Psalm4:8.

Sleep is closely connected to mental and emotional health, with links to depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and other conditions. Getting enough sleep reduces stress, improves our mood and allows us to think more clearly and do better.



While seven hours of sleep per night is the general recommendation for adults, it's also important for that time to be **Quality** sleep. As an important contributor to nearly all the systems of the body, a full, **quality** night's sleep involves several cycles of set stages that each serves a purpose for our body, brain and spirit.

In **Stage 1, or Non-REM 1**, you've just dozed off and started transitioning to **Stage 2**, which involves further slowing of activity in the brain and body. It's much easier to be awoken during these early stages of the sleep cycle.

Stage 3 is the deepest part of non-REM sleep. In this stage, your muscles and body relax even more, and brain waves show a clear pattern of slowed activity that is markedly different from when the body is fully awake.

Stage 4 is the only stage of **REM (Rapid Eye Movement)** sleep. During this time, brain activity picks up significantly, and most of the body—except the eyes and breathing muscles—experience temporary paralysis. Although dreams can happen during any stage, the most intense dreaming takes place during **REM** sleep. This stage is believed to be essential for the brain, enabling key cognitive functions, like memory and ability to learn. As the night goes on, it's normal to spend a greater percentage of time in **REM** sleep with most of it occurring in the second half of the night.

Sleepers who awaken during earlier stages, such as people with **Sleep Apnea**, may struggle to properly cycle into these deeper sleep stages. People with **insomnia** may not get enough total sleep to accumulate the needed time in each stage.

Benefits of power napping. There is a lot of discussion when the topic is napping. There are right ways to provide a quick rest that result in a productive day. The recommendation by The Sleep Foundation is to limit the time to 20 to 30 minutes.

Some tips for limiting your naptime to have the best results are :

- Set an alarm
- Find a comfortable nap space
- Turn off the lights or close the blinds
- Allow yourself to truly rest—don't use your phone or think about work.

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/stages-of-sleep> Wellness champions, Concordia Plans