

Script – Print - Slumber Hours Slump

Study shows Americans losing ground on getting enough sleep

Are you getting enough sleep? According to a recent study, perhaps not.

Ball State University researchers say their analysis of 150,000 working American adults since 2010 shows the prevalence of inadequate sleep - seven hours or less - has climbed to 35.6%. That's more than a 15 percent increase in less than a decade.

The reasons can be many - there are mental factors, like stress and anxiety. Or chronic health problems - such as sleep apnea, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, thyroid or lung disease - maybe chronic pain.

Even if there is no cause, sleep experts, like Deb Tapp, Polysomnographic Technologist at the Sleep Lab at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center, says you have to work at good sleep.

"You should have structured bed times," says Deb Tapp, Polysomnographic Technologist at the Sleep Lab at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "Probably have the same sleep time - wake time - you know, regardless, or not, of whether you're working, or not. You should probably have a little bit of a wind down time before bed."

Then there are the internal/external factors you must avoid, such as stimulants, like caffeine or alcohol, prior to bedtime. And before you turn in you need to turn off.

"I mean, even in the sleep lab, we see people we have to ask to put their devices away in order to do the sleep study," says Deb Tapp, Polysomnographic Technologist at the Sleep Lab at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "Because people are just on their phones texting and on social media for hours instead of going to sleep. And when we ask them to put it away, quite often they fall asleep pretty quickly."

Tapp says any little change can affect your sleep. Take the extra hour we get this weekend with the end of Daylight Saving Time. Just like when we set the clock ahead 60 minutes in the spring, treat it like jet lag. Only we know this is coming - so make adjustments.

"Try to get the best sleep you can that night," says Deb Tapp, Polysomnographic Technologist at the Sleep Lab at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "And be aware that for some people it really can affect your daytime functioning for a short period of time until you get used to it."

Making small, sensible changes can help you regularly get a good night's sleep. However, if you find it difficult to stay alert and awake during the day or your ability to perform tasks or make decisions is affected, it could be a sure sign of a lack of sleep. Then it's time to seek professional help from your physician and an OSF Sleep Lab.