How Much Sleep Do You Need?

Humans, like all animals, need sleep, along with food, water and oxygen, to survive. For humans sleep is a vital indicator of overall health and well-being. We spend up to one-third of our lives asleep, and the overall state of our "sleep health" remains an essential question throughout our lifespan.

Most of us know that getting a good night’s sleep is important, but too few of us actually make those eight or so hours between the sheets a priority. For many of us with sleep debt, we’ve forgotten what “being really, truly rested” feels like. To further complicate matters, stimulants like coffee and energy drinks, alarm clocks, and external lights—including those from electronic devices—interferes with our “circadian rhythm” or natural sleep/wake cycle.

Sleep needs vary across ages and are especially impacted by lifestyle and health. To determine how much sleep you need, it’s important to assess not only where you fall on the "sleep needs spectrum," but also to examine what lifestyle factors are affecting the quality and quantity of your sleep such as work schedules and stress.

To get the sleep you need, you must look at the big picture.

How Much Sleep Do We Really Need: Revisited

We at the National Sleep Foundation make it our mission to champion not only sleep science, but sleep health for the individual. And so, on the eve of our 25th anniversary, we are releasing the results of a world-class study that took more than two years of research to complete – an update to our most-cited guidelines on how much sleep you really need at each age. You can read the research paper published in Sleep Health.

Eighteen leading scientists and researchers came together to form the National Sleep Foundation’s expert panel tasked with updating the official recommendations. The panelists included six sleep specialists and representatives from leading organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Association of Anatomists, American College of Chest Physicians, American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Geriatrics Society, American Neurological Association, American Physiological Society, American Psychiatric Association, Gerontological Society of America, Human Anatomy and Physiology Society, and Society for Research in Human Development. The panelists participated in a rigorous scientific process that included reviewing over 300 current scientific publications and voting on how much sleep is appropriate throughout the lifespan.

“Millions of individuals trust the National Sleep Foundation for its sleep duration recommendations. As the voice for sleep health it is the NSF’s responsibility to make sure that our recommendations are supported by the most rigorous science,” says Charles Czeisler, MD, PhD, chairman of the board of the National Sleep Foundation and chief of sleep medicine at Brigham and Women’s Hospital. “Individuals, particularly parents, rely on us for this information.”
How Much Sleep Do You Need?

How Much Sleep Do You Need?

Though research cannot pinpoint an exact amount of sleep need by people at different ages, our new chart, which features minimum and maximum ranges for health as well as “recommended” windows, identifies the "rule-of-thumb" amounts experts agree upon.

Nevertheless, it's important to pay attention to your own individual needs by assessing how you feel on different amounts of sleep.

- Are you productive, healthy and happy on seven hours of sleep? Or does it take you nine hours of quality ZZZs to get you into high gear?
- Do you have health issues such as being overweight? Are you at risk for any disease?
- Are you experiencing sleep problems?
- Do you depend on caffeine to get you through the day?
- Do you feel sleepy when driving?

These are questions that you ask before you can find the number that works for you.

Sleep Time Recommendations: What’s Changed?

“The NSF has committed to regularly reviewing and providing scientifically rigorous recommendations,” says Max Hirshkowitz, PhD, Chair of the National Sleep Foundation Scientific Advisory Council. “The public can be confident that these recommendations represent the best guidance for sleep duration and health.”

A new range, "may be appropriate,” has been added to acknowledge the individual variability in appropriate sleep durations. The recommendations now define times as either (a) recommended; (b) may be appropriate for some individuals; or (c) not recommended.

The panel revised the recommended sleep ranges for all six children and teen age groups. A summary of the new recommendations includes:

- Newborns (0-3 months): Sleep range narrowed to 14-17 hours each day (previously it was 12-18)
- Infants (4-11 months): Sleep range widened two hours to 12-15 hours (previously it was 14-15)
- Toddlers (1-2 years): Sleep range widened by one hour to 11-14 hours (previously it was 12-14)
- Preschoolers (3-5): Sleep range widened by one hour to 10-13 hours (previously it was 11-13)
- School age children (6-13): Sleep range widened by one hour to 9-11 hours (previously it was 10-11)
- Teenagers (14-17): Sleep range widened by one hour to 8-10 hours (previously it was 8.5-9.5)
- Younger adults (18-25): Sleep range is 7-9 hours (new age category)
- Adults (26-64): Sleep range did not change and remains 7-9 hours
- Older adults (65+): Sleep range is 7-8 hours (new age category)
How Much Sleep Do You Need?

**Improve Your Sleep Today: Make Sleep a Priority**

To begin a new path towards healthier sleep and a healthier lifestyle, begin by assessing your own individual needs and habits. See how you respond to different amounts of sleep.

Pay careful attention to your mood, energy and health after a poor night's sleep versus a good one. Ask yourself, "How often do I get a good night's sleep?" Like good diet and exercise, sleep is a critical component to overall health.

To pave the way for better sleep, follow these simple yet effective healthy sleep tips, including:

- **Stick to a sleep schedule**, even on weekends.
- **Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual**.
- **Exercise** daily.
- **Evaluate your bedroom to ensure ideal temperature, sound and light**.
- **Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillows**.
- **Beware of hidden sleep stealers**, like alcohol and caffeine.
- **Turn off electronics** before bed.

If you or a family member are experiencing symptoms such as sleepiness during the day or when you expect to be awake and alert, snoring, leg cramps or tingling, gasping or difficulty breathing during sleep, prolonged insomnia or another symptom that is preventing you from sleeping well, you should consult your primary care physician or find a sleep professional to determine the underlying cause.

You may also try using the National Sleep Foundation Sleep Diary to track your sleep habits over a one- or two-week period and bring the results to your physician.

Most importantly, **make sleep a priority**. You must schedule sleep like any other daily activity, so put it on your "to-do list" and cross it off every night. But don’t make it the thing you do only after everything else is done – stop doing other things so you get the sleep you need.

*For more information on healthy sleep, visit National Sleep Foundation’s new publication, Sleep.org, today!*
How Much Sleep Do You Need?

RECOMMENDED SLEEP

HOURS OF SLEEP

- **OLDER ADULT**
  - 65 years and older
  - Recommended Range: 5 - 6
  - 7 - 8
  - Not Recommended: 9

- **ADULT**
  - 26 - 64 years
  - Recommended Range: 6
  - 7 - 9
  - Not Recommended: 10

- **YOUNG ADULT**
  - 18 - 24 years
  - Recommended Range: 6
  - 7 - 9
  - Not Recommended: 10 - 11

- **TEENAGER**
  - 14 - 17 years
  - Recommended Range: 7
  - 8 - 10
  - Not Recommended: 11

- **SCHOOL AGE**
  - 6 - 12 years
  - Recommended Range: 7 - 8
  - 9 - 11
  - Not Recommended: 12

- **PRESCHOOL**
  - 3 - 5 years
  - Recommended Range: 8 - 9
  - 10 - 13
  - Not Recommended: 14

- **TODDLER**
  - 1 - 2 years
  - Recommended Range: 9 - 10
  - 11 - 14
  - Not Recommended: 15 - 16

- **INFANT**
  - 4 - 11 months
  - Recommended Range: 10 - 11
  - 12 - 15
  - Not Recommended: 16 - 18

- **NEWBORN**
  - 0 - 3 months
  - Recommended Range: 11 - 13
  - 14 - 17
  - Not Recommended: 18 - 19

Legend:
- **Recommended Range**
- **May be Appropriate**
- **Not Recommended**