



Ergo Tip of the Month - June 2008

Taking Ergonomics Home: Are You Getting Enough Sleep?

According to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF)(1), insufficient sleep is related to health problems and costs the US economy billions of dollars each year. Sleep deprivation is something we may not pay a lot of attention to, other than knowing we are tired and would love a good nights rest; however, it is a basic necessity of life, as important to our health and well being as food, water and the air we breathe.

When we don't get enough sleep every part of our lives can suffer. Our relationships, jobs, health and safety (and that of those around us) are all put at risk(1). Listed below are some "Sleep Facts and Stats" as presented by the NSF(2).

Sleep Facts and Stats:

1. Sleep represents one third of every individual's life and is perhaps the single most important factor in determining how humans live, perform, think, and function during the other two-thirds of the day. Sleepiness affects vigilance, reaction times, learning abilities, alertness, mood, hand-eye coordination, and the accuracy of short-term memory problems.
2. Approximately 70 million Americans suffer from chronic sleep disorders or intermittent sleep.
3. Sleepiness, as a result of untreated sleep disorders or voluntary sleep deprivation, has been identified as the cause of a growing number of on-the-job accidents.
4. Impairment from fatigue is similar to that of alcohol and drugs. Studies reported in the NSF site show that after 17 hours of being awake, people have impaired functioning and after 24 hours of wakefulness, people are more impaired than someone who is legally drunk (0.10% BAC).
5. Too little sleep may lead to obesity—another national health problem. One of the keys to this relationship may be the hormone leptin, which signals when the body needs or does not need more food. During sleep leptin levels rise and signal a decrease in caloric need. During periods of sleep deprivation, leptin levels are low, signaling increased caloric need.
6. As many as 18 million Americans suffer from sleep apnea, a serious, potentially life-threatening breathing disorder that can be treated in most cases.

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7. Insomnia costs your business money. According to a national survey, 87% of workers are concerned that they are not getting enough sleep. Insomnia affects over half (50%) of the adult population at least 3 nights a week and is associated with performance problems at work.
8. Drowsy Driving is common and deadly. According to NSF national surveys, half (50%) of all adults report that they have driven drowsy and one in five (20%) admit to dozing off at the wheel at least once in the prior year. Sleep-related crashes cause more than 1,550 deaths and 71,000 injuries as well as \$12.5 billion in economic losses annually.
9. America's sleep debt is on the rise. It is estimated that by the year 2050 more than 100 million Americans will have sleep disorders and problems. The Institute of Medicine estimates that sleep disorders and chronic sleep deprivation cost the U.S. economy more than \$100 billion in direct and indirect losses each year.

With research pointing to insufficient sleep as a major health and economic problem in the US (3), some tips for getting a good night sleep are presented below:

Tips for a Good Sleep:

- Avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, soft drinks, chocolate) and nicotine (cigarettes, tobacco products) close to bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol as it can lead to disrupted sleep.
- Exercise regularly, but complete your workout at least 3 hours before bedtime.
- Establish a regular relaxing, not alerting, bedtime routine (e.g. taking a bath or relaxing in a hot tub).
- Create a sleep-conducive environment that is dark, quiet and preferably cool and comfortable.

References

1. National Sleep Foundation: http://www.sleepfoundation.org/site/c.hu1XKjM0IxF/b.2417141/k.2E30/The_National_Sleep_Foundation.htm
2. <http://www.sleepworks.org/site/c.hjIMI1PKKqG/b.4073507/>
http://www.sleepfoundation.org/site/c.hu1XKjM0IxF/b.2419187/k.7254/Let_Sleep_Work_for_You.htm

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