

## - Sleep

**Health benefits from sleeping**

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TODAY is World Sleep Day, a day to advocate and educate the world about the importance of sleep in achieving an optimal quality of life and improving global health.



This year's theme, "Regular sleep, healthy future", could not be more suitable as chronic sleep deprivation is associated with obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Chronic sleep deprivation increases the levels of stress hormones and inflammation, leading to hypertension and cardiovascular diseases such as heart attack and stroke. Insulin function, which controls blood sugar, is affected and increases the risk of diabetes and obesity.

A review of 20 studies showed that short duration and poor quality of sleep was associated with a higher level of inadequate blood sugar control among patients with type 2 diabetes.

The 2019 National Health and Morbidity Survey reported that 50.1% of our adult population are overweight or obese, 30.0% suffer from hypertension and 18.3% have diabetes. Meanwhile, cardiovascular diseases are the number one cause of death in Malaysia.

Research should be conducted on the quality of sleep among Malaysians, as this may be one of the factors associated with these diseases.

Most adults need between seven and nine hours of good quality sleep every night. However, only 21% have at least seven hours of sleep and 19% had no disturbance in daytime function due to sleepiness, according to a study titled "Clustering of Lifestyle risk factors and Understanding its association with Stress on health and wellbeing among school Teachers in Malaysia (CLUSTer)". Overall, 61% of the participants in the study had poor quality sleep. However, 87% self-reported that their overall sleep quality was fairly good to very good, showing that they were not aware of the problems they were having in sleeping.

Chronic sleep deprivation, which has become a global epidemic due to urbanisation, frantic lifestyles and high usage of smartphones and other electronic devices, is an important risk factor for NCDs that is modifiable. However, it is often not recognised and therefore under-reported. It is not routinely assessed in daily clinical practice or captured in databases. If you feel tired or cranky and find it hard to concentrate on what you are doing, you may be showing symptoms of sleep deprivation. The World Sleep Society, which advances knowledge about sleep, circadian rhythms, sleep health, and sleep disorders worldwide, recommends the following 10 steps to achieve healthy sleep:

1. Fix a bedtime and an awakening routine;
2. If you have the habit of taking a nap, do not exceed 45 minutes of daytime sleep;
3. Avoid excessive alcohol ingestion four hours before bedtime and do not smoke;
4. Avoid caffeine six hours before bedtime. This includes coffee, tea, sodas and chocolate;
5. Avoid heavy, spicy or sugary foods four hours before bedtime. A light snack before bed is acceptable;
6. Exercise regularly but not right before bedtime;
7. Use comfortable bedding;
8. Find a comfortable temperature setting for sleeping and keep the room well ventilated;
9. Block out all distracting noise and eliminate as much light as possible; and
10. Reserve the bed for sleep. Do not use the bed as an office, workroom or recreation room.