

# Sleep

"It took me until my senior year to realize I kept getting wicked sick around midterm time. I finally added some sleep and vitamins to my overwhelming schedule. I don't think I got that horrible cold my last year."

— **KAITLYN**, STONY BROOK SENIOR

According to the 2009 Health Assessment Survey, 23.2% of Stony Brook students reported that sleep difficulties impacted their academic performance. Insomnia is defined as difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or poor quality of sleep. As a college student sleep is the first thing to go when the pressure is on. Sleep is a very important self-management tool to succeed as a student.

The National Sleep Foundation identifies a few dangers associated with SLEEPLESSNESS:

- More than 10% of drivers admit to having dozed off at the wheel. 30% of road accidents—including many deaths—are caused by sleeplessness.
- College-age students (and everyone else) need at least eight hours of sleep to maintain optimum health and learning capabilities.
- Due to pressures of school, family, and a social life, few students are sleeping nearly enough.
- Some students also hold jobs to help defray college expenses which will affect sleep.

All these pressures increase stress and stress can lead to insomnia and even more sleep loss. NSF also states there are medical conditions related to sleep deprivation, depression, obesity, and accelerated aging process. Sleep is the only way to beat fatigue. It is important to recognize the signs (irritability, memory loss, illness, etc.) of being sleep-deprived and increase your sleep to diminish them. A regular bed and wake time within a sleep-conducive environment will support a good night's sleep. Also, it is important to avoid caffeine, nicotine, and/or alcohol close to bed time.

## TOP TEN TIPS TO HELP YOU GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP!

1. Establish a regular bed and wake time schedule, even on weekends.
2. Establish a regular, relaxing bedtime routine such as taking a hot bath and then reading a book or listening to soothing music.
3. Create a sleep-conducive environment that is dark, quiet, comfortable, and cool.
4. Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillow.
5. Finish eating 2–3 hours before your regular bedtime.
6. Exercise regularly. It is best to complete your workout a few hours before bedtime.
7. Avoid caffeine (e.g., coffee, tea, soft drinks, chocolate) close to bedtime. It can keep you awake.
8. Avoid nicotine (e.g., cigarettes, tobacco products) close to bedtime. It can lead to poor sleep.
9. Avoid alcohol close to bedtime. It can lead to disrupted sleep later in the night.
10. Keep a journal next to your bed to write down any thoughts to clear your mind for sleep.

"I definitely missed out on a lot of sleep my freshman year. Sleep is so amazingly important. When I get my 8 hours of sleep I feel energized. I can get to class, focus and get my work done. So, I figured out what my important priorities were and sleep is up there on the top of my list."

—**CRYSTAL**, STONY BROOK SOPHOMORE

"I always enjoyed sleep and I didn't realize how important it was until I came to college. Countless nights I spent on the phone, hanging out and watching TV. This led to missing classes. Now I make it my priority to get enough sleep and it has improved my attendance and class participation."

—PASCALE, STONY BROOK SOPHOMORE