Link Between Sleep Deprivation and Safety



For those who lead busy lives, getting enough rest can sometimes be at the bottom of your priorities list. Sleep deprivation is a common problem for many teens and adults. While some willingly choose to sacrifice their slumber to meet other demands, other individuals may struggle to fall or stay asleep at night.

While poor shuteye is linked to serious mental and health complications, research has found that it is also a public safety threat. This article will cover the research and data behind the dangers of insufficient sleep and why prioritizing sleep can help make you safer.

Why don’t we get enough rest?

A lack of shuteye can result from many different issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, illness, social outings, work, school, travel, or too much caffeine. There are also a variety of sleep disorders that can negatively impact how well you rest.

Insomnia, sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome (RLS), and periodic limb movement disorder (PLMD) are some examples of common sleep disorders. Industry experts at Sleep Advisor provide detailed guides on these types of sleep disorders and more to help those living with these conditions.

How much sleep do we need?

Your ideal sleep duration is dependent upon your age and health circumstances. For example, children, teens, and those recovering from an illness typically need more slumber than healthy adults. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) recommends that a healthy adult individual sleeps between seven and nine hours every night. While some may feel refreshed after resting for seven hours, others may need closer to nine. You may need to test out different sleep durations within this range to find your ideal amount of shuteye.

Why is sleep deprivation dangerous?

When you don’t get enough rest, this can diminish your cognitive performance. Research has found that insufficient rest impairs the ability to pay attention, working memory, long-term, and decision-making. Furthermore, this type of brain fog can be a safety threat to you and those around you.

Workplace Accidents

According to health experts, sleep-deprived workers are at an increased risk of injuries or accidents at work. Harvard Health reports that inadequate rest has been linked to several major disasters on the job, including the Chernobyl nuclear accident and the fatal space shuttle Challenger explosion. There is also research that suggests sleep deprivation may play a role in preventable medical errors.

Even for those who aren’t piloting a space shuttle or operating on a patient, workers in almost every field are vulnerable to accidents that could injure themselves, a customer, bystander, or colleague. You may think those extra hours and staying up late means you’re a hard worker, but the risks may outweigh any reward. With this in mind, it suggests that one of the best ways to be an excellent employee is to get the rest you need to do your best to the best of your ability.

Drowsy Driving

There’s plenty of discussions about driving under the influence of alcohol or texting while behind the wheel. However, driving while tired is also a major safety threat. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), an estimated 91,000 car crashes in 2017 involved drowsy drivers.

In addition to prioritizing a good night’s rest, the NHTSA suggests drinking a cup or two of coffee and pulling over for a 20-minute nap if you’re feeling sleepy on the road. Coffee or energy drinks aren’t always enough to keep you alert for the rest of your journey, and therefore, you may need to nap too. You should also check the side effects of any medications you take, as some could cause additional drowsiness.

Source: Sleepadvisor.org