

# Sleep

## The Secret Superpower

Why the hours you spend asleep are the most important hours of your day

■ B1 Reading ■ 30 min ■ Everyday Life

<b>Level</b>	B1 (Intermediate)
<b>Skill</b>	Reading
<b>Topic</b>	Everyday Life
<b>Duration</b>	30 minutes
<b>Age Group</b>	Teens & Adults

### Learning Objectives

- ◆ Read and understand a text about the science and importance of sleep
- ◆ Learn 15 key vocabulary items related to health, habits, and the body
- ◆ Identify the stages of sleep and the effects of sleep deprivation
- ◆ Discuss personal sleep habits and routines
- ◆ Write a reflective paragraph about personal sleep patterns

## 1 Before You Read — Sleep Habits

Think about your own sleep habits and discuss:

1. How many hours do you sleep on a typical night? Do you think it is enough?
2. What do you usually do in the hour before going to bed?
3. Have you ever had a really bad night's sleep? How did it affect you the next day?

## 2 Reading: The Science of Sleep

### The Science of Sleep: Why Rest Matters More Than You Think

We spend approximately one third of our lives asleep. That means a person who lives to the age of 75 will have spent roughly 25 years sleeping. It might seem like a waste of time, but scientists now understand that sleep is not a passive state of doing nothing — it is one of the most active and important processes in the human body. Without adequate sleep, our brains cannot function properly, our bodies cannot heal, and our **emotional** health suffers dramatically.

Despite this, millions of people around the world are not getting enough rest. The World Health Organisation has declared a **sleep deprivation** epidemic in industrialised nations, with the average adult sleeping less than seven hours per night — significantly below the recommended eight hours. But what exactly happens when we sleep, and why is it so crucial?

### What Happens When You Sleep?

Sleep is divided into several **stages**, each with a different function. During light sleep, your body begins to relax and your heart rate slows down. In deep sleep — the most **restorative** stage — your body repairs muscles, strengthens the immune system, and releases growth hormones. This is the phase that makes you feel physically refreshed the next morning.

Then there is REM sleep — Rapid Eye Movement sleep — which is when most dreaming occurs. During REM sleep, your brain is almost as active as when you are awake. This stage is essential for **memory** processing: your brain sorts through the information you gathered during the day, decides what to keep and what to discard, and strengthens important **neural pathways**. Students who get a good night's sleep after studying perform significantly better in exams than those who stay up all night cramming.

## The Dangers of Too Little Sleep

**Chronic** sleep deprivation — regularly sleeping less than six hours per night — has serious consequences. In the short term, it impairs your **concentration**, slows your reaction time, and makes you more **irritable** and emotional. Studies show that driving after being awake for 24 hours is as dangerous as driving with a blood alcohol level above the legal limit.

In the long term, the effects are even more alarming. Persistent lack of sleep increases the risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. It weakens the immune system, making you more **susceptible** to illnesses. It has also been strongly linked to mental health problems including depression and anxiety. Your brain literally cannot clean itself properly without adequate sleep — during deep sleep, a special system flushes out toxic waste products that **accumulate** during the day.

## Why We Struggle to Sleep

If sleep is so important, why do so many of us struggle with it? Modern life provides plenty of answers. Artificial light — especially the blue light from phone and computer screens — disrupts the production of **melatonin**, the hormone that tells your body it is time to sleep. Caffeine, which many people consume throughout the day, blocks the chemical signals that make you feel tired. Stress and **overthinking** keep the mind racing when it should be winding down.

Our always-on culture also plays a role. Many people feel guilty about sleeping, viewing it as unproductive time that could be spent working, studying, or socialising. This attitude is not only wrong — it is dangerous. Sleep is not the enemy of **productivity**; it is its greatest ally. Well-rested people are more creative, make better decisions, and are far more efficient than their sleep-deprived counterparts.

## How to Sleep Better

The good news is that improving your sleep is surprisingly simple. Sleep scientists recommend establishing a consistent **routine** — going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, including weekends. Avoid screens for at least one hour before bedtime, and keep your bedroom cool, dark, and quiet. Regular exercise during the day helps you fall asleep faster, but avoid intense workouts close to bedtime.

Limit caffeine after midday, and avoid large meals or alcohol in the evening. If you find it difficult to switch off your mind, try relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, reading a book, or listening to calm music. And if you are still struggling after several weeks, do not hesitate to speak to a doctor — sleep disorders are common and highly **treatable**.

Think of sleep as an investment, not a luxury. The hours you spend asleep are not wasted — they are the foundation that everything else in your life is built upon.

## 3 Key Vocabulary

Word / Phrase	Definition	Example Sentence
<b>sleep deprivation</b>	a condition of not having enough sleep over time	Sleep deprivation can seriously affect your ability to concentrate.
<b>emotional</b>	relating to feelings and emotions	Lack of sleep makes people more emotional and easily upset.
<b>stages</b>	distinct phases or steps in a process	Sleep is divided into several stages, each with a different function.
<b>restorative</b>	having the ability to restore health and strength	Deep sleep is the most restorative stage of the sleep cycle.

Word / Phrase	Definition	Example Sentence
<b>memory</b>	the ability to remember information and experiences	REM sleep plays a crucial role in memory processing.
<b>neural pathways</b>	connections between nerve cells in the brain	Sleep strengthens the neural pathways that help us learn.
<b>chronic</b>	lasting for a long time; constant and recurring	Chronic sleep deprivation increases the risk of serious illness.
<b>concentration</b>	the ability to focus your attention on one thing	Even one bad night affects your concentration the next day.
<b>irritable</b>	easily annoyed or made angry	He becomes very irritable when he has not slept enough.
<b>susceptible</b>	likely to be affected by something	Tired people are more susceptible to colds and infections.
<b>accumulate</b>	to gradually collect or build up over time	Toxins accumulate in the brain during waking hours.
<b>melatonin</b>	a hormone that regulates sleep and waking cycles	Blue light from screens reduces melatonin production.
<b>overthinking</b>	thinking about something too much or for too long	Overthinking at bedtime is one of the main causes of insomnia.
<b>productivity</b>	the rate at which work is completed effectively	Good sleep is the foundation of high productivity.
<b>routine</b>	a regular sequence of actions followed every day	A consistent bedtime routine helps you fall asleep faster.

## 4 Useful Collocations

sleep deprivation · deep sleep · sleep cycle · fall asleep · wake up · bedtime routine · mental health · immune system · blood pressure · brain function · sleep disorder · blue light · sleep hygiene · well-rested · stay up late · wind down

## 5 Reading Comprehension

**1. How much of our lives do we spend asleep?**

- a) About one quarter
- b) About one third ✓**
- c) About half
- d) About two thirds

**2. What happens during REM sleep?**

- a) The body repairs muscles and bones
- b) Heart rate drops to its lowest point
- c) The brain processes memories and sorts information ✓**
- d) Growth hormones are released

**3. How dangerous is driving after 24 hours without sleep?**

- a) It is slightly dangerous
- b) It is not dangerous at all
- c) It is as dangerous as drunk driving above the legal limit ✓**
- d) It is only dangerous for elderly drivers

**4. What does melatonin do?**

- a) It makes you feel hungry at night
- b) It regulates sleep and waking cycles ✓**
- c) It increases your energy levels
- d) It improves your memory during sleep

**5. Why do many people feel guilty about sleeping?**

- a) Because doctors tell them to sleep less
- b) Because they view sleep as unproductive time ✓**
- c) Because sleeping too much causes health problems
- d) Because their friends make fun of them

**6. What is the most important advice for better sleep?**

- a) Sleep as much as possible at weekends
- b) Exercise intensely right before bed
- c) Keep a consistent routine with the same bed and wake times ✓**
- d) Drink coffee in the evening to stay alert

**6 Vocabulary Exercise — Fill in the Blanks**

Complete the sentences with the correct word from the box:

sleep deprivation · routine · concentration · melatonin · irritable · chronic · susceptible · restorative

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is a growing problem in modern industrialised countries.
2. Having a consistent bedtime \_\_\_\_\_ helps your body know when to sleep.
3. Even one night of bad sleep can seriously reduce your \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Blue light from phones blocks the production of \_\_\_\_\_ in your brain.
5. People who do not sleep enough become moody and \_\_\_\_\_.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ lack of sleep increases the risk of heart disease and diabetes.
7. When you are tired, your body is more \_\_\_\_\_ to colds and infections.
8. Deep sleep is the most \_\_\_\_\_ phase — it repairs your body overnight.

## 7 Answer Key

### ■ Vocabulary Exercise Answers

1. Sleep deprivation
2. routine
3. concentration
4. melatonin
5. irritable
6. Chronic
7. susceptible
8. restorative

## 8 Speaking & Writing Tasks

### ■ Speaking Task: Discussion

Discuss these questions with a partner or your teacher:

- How many hours of sleep do you need to feel your best? Do you usually get enough?
- What is your bedtime routine? What helps you fall asleep?
- Do you think schools and workplaces should start later in the morning? Why?
- Would you rather sleep more or have more free time in the evening? Why?

### ■ Useful Phrases for Talking About Habits

- I usually go to bed around midnight, but I know I should sleep earlier.
- I tend to check my phone before bed, which probably affects my sleep.
- What helps me fall asleep is reading a book or listening to music.
- I have noticed that when I sleep well, I am much more productive.
- The main reason I do not sleep enough is that I stay up too late watching videos.

### Writing Task: My Sleep Diary

Write a paragraph (120–160 words) about this topic:

**"Describe your typical sleep routine. How many hours do you sleep? What helps you sleep well, and what keeps you awake? Would you like to change anything about your sleep habits?"**

Use vocabulary from this lesson. Include specific details about your habits and explain how sleep (or lack of it) affects your daily life.