



# Signs you are in Sleep Debt

“In a Nutshell”



## The following are clues that you are lacking sleep and that you need to put sleep higher on your agenda.

**Decisions are harder to make** – Making even small trivial decisions appears harder towards the end of your day. Lack of sleep can lead to poor or sometimes risky judgement. This is because tiredness effects activity in the area of the brain involved in planning and decision making turning even simple choices into long agonising dilemmas.

**You cannot stop eating** – Lack of sleep upsets your levels of appetite regulating hormones which stimulates hunger and tells you when you have had enough to eat, this leads to constant aimless snacking. Fatigue also makes you more likely to crave sugary foods for a quick energy boost and dents self-control so you are more likely to reach for chocolate than a health snack!

**You are more bug prone** – We are three times more likely to be susceptible to colds if we are sleep deprived. A single bad night's sleep can lower the levels of white blood cells in your system, these cells work in our bodies to help fight off infection.

**Your health is at risk** – People who usually sleep less than five hours a night have an increased risk of having or developing diabetes. Going without sleep over a long period of time is also supposed to be associated with increased heartrate, blood pressure and inflammation which can put a strain on your heart.

**You feel emotional** – Sleep is closely linked to the way we process emotions so if you find yourself uncharacteristically welling up at a sad song do not just dismiss it.

**You are a little clumsier than usual** – Sleep loss effects the ability to control your muscles and slows your reaction times making you more prone to accidents.

### How much sleep do I need?

We need seven to nine hours of sleep. The amount of sleep we need is usually set by our early twenties, although health and other issues can interfere and effect this.

### How to catch up on lost sleep?

Extended 'recovery sleep' at weekends can reverse some of the negative effects of sleep loss. Start by going to bed one or two hours earlier than usual and (if you have nothing planned) turn off your alarm and allow yourself to wake up naturally. You will probably sleep up to 10 hours when you begin this process but as you start to catch up on the sleep you have lost the amount you sleep in will lessen.

### Having problems nodding off?

- During the day get outside if you can for 10-15 minutes, this helps set your body clock.
- Limit caffeine intake to before lunch and keep an eye on how many cups you are drinking.
- Thirty minutes of exercise a day is recommended (although not within 3 hours of bedtime)
- Start winding down 90 minutes before you plan to go to bed. You can do this by switching off your phone or other mobile devices, park your worries and do non-stimulating activities.
- Ban all technology from your bedroom, make it a calm zone for sleep!