

## ***Good Sleep Habits***

### **Why is sleep so important?**

Sleep is important to brain health. Good habits for restful sleep are the key to dealing with the symptoms of depression. Research shows a clear link between sleep and depression so here are some tips to help you form good sleep habits.

### **Develop a regular sleep routine**

- Go to bed and wake up around the same time every day.

### **Have a pre-bedtime routine**

- Try to have the same routine every night before you go to bed (brushing your teeth, washing your face, etc.)
- A warm bath or shower may help you relax and get into “sleep mode.”
- Meditation or quiet time before bed may also help.



### **Have a quiet and comfortable bedroom**

- Set your bedroom thermostat at a comfortable temperature. In general, a little cooler is better than warmer.
- Turn off the TV and other noises that may disrupt sleep. Background sounds (white noise) like a fan could help.
- If your pets wake you, keep them out of the bedroom.
- Your bedroom should be dark. Turn off bright lights.
- Have a comfortable mattress.
- If you are a ‘clock watcher’ at night, hide the clock.

### **Don’t watch TV, read, work, or be on social media in bed**

- Saving your bed for sleeping and sex tells your mind that it is time to sleep when you go to bed.
- When you watch TV or read in bed, your mind relates your bed to wakefulness.
- Being on a computer or a phone will distract you from a routine or sleep preparation.

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## ***Caring for Yourself, continued***

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### **Don't drink caffeine after 12 p.m. (noon)**

- The effects of caffeine may last for several hours.
- Caffeine can disrupt sleep and make it hard to fall asleep. Use caffeine only before noon.
- Remember that soda and tea have caffeine.

### **Avoid common items that affect sleep**

- Cigarettes, alcohol, and over-the-counter meds can cause restlessness or trouble staying asleep.

### **Exercise regularly**

- Exercise is crucial to your overall health.
- Exercise spreads endorphins, which your body makes to relieve stress and enhance pleasure. They may make it harder to fall asleep, so try not to exercise after 2 p.m.

### **Don't stay in bed awake for more than 5-10 minutes**

- If your mind is racing or worrying about not being able to sleep, get out of bed. Sit in a chair in the dark. Stay in the chair until you are sleepy, then go back to bed.
- No TV or Internet during these periods! That will just wake up your brain more.
- If this happens several times during the night, that is okay. Just maintain your regular wake time.

## ***Diet and Exercise***

Healthful eating and regular exercise are two of the simplest, most effective ways that a woman can improve health. These behaviors improve mental and physical health in the present, prevent disease, and help people live longer, healthier, happier lives in the future.

A balanced, nutritious diet lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, hypertension (high blood pressure), and other conditions. Eating enough calories to supply, but not exceed, the body's needs helps maintain a healthy weight and extends the quality and length of life. A breastfeeding/pumping mother will require more calories in their daily diet. Regular physical activity offers numerous benefits, including improving cardiovascular health, mood, and quality of sleep; reducing stress; and helping older adults to maintain function and preserve independence.

### **Components of a Healthy Diet:**

- A primary focus on fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, as well as low-fat dairy products, seafood and legumes (beans, peas, and lentils), and nuts.
- Reduced amounts of red and processed meats and fatty dairy products
- Small amounts of refined grains, sweetened foods and drinks
- For those who drink, moderate amounts of alcohol. *If you are a breastfeeding mother*, please follow proper recommendations about alcohol in breastmilk from your doctor, nurse, baby's doctor or lactation consultant.
- All women of childbearing age should include 400-600 micrograms of folate or folic acid in their daily diet.

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# ***Caring for Yourself, continued***

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## **Components of Physical Fitness:**

- Cardiovascular endurance- the ability to carry on vigorous physical activity for an extended period of time. It is the most vital element of fitness. It measures the heart's ability to pump blood efficiently through the body.
- Muscular strength- the total force that muscle groups produce in one effort, such as a lift, jump or heave. Strength training with free weights, weight machines, or other equipment is the best way to increase muscle strength.
- Muscular endurance- the ability to perform repeated muscular contractions over time without tiring. Although muscle endurance requires strength, it is not a single, all-out effort. The keys to increasing muscle endurance are repetition, working out a moderate level, and building up to a specific goal.
- Flexibility- the ability of the joints to move through their full range of motion. natural flexibility varies from person to person and from joint to joint. Good flexibility protects muscles against pulls and tears. Stretching the major body areas (legs, shoulders, arms, neck and back) for 15-30 seconds at a time, at least 3 times a week is the best way to improve and maintain flexibility.



## ***Mental Health***

### **Factors affecting mental health:**

- Biological factors- a person's genes, physical health, and hormones can play a part in mental health. Although reproductive hormonal changes do not normally cause mental health illness, the shifts in hormones may affect the severity of depression during premenstrual syndrome, postpartum depression, and postpartum psychosis.
- Social and Psychosocial factors- a person's physical and social environment, from sources of real or perceived danger; to relationships with friends, family, and colleagues; to societal expectations based on a person's gender, race, relative wealth, or other factors also have numerous effects on mental health.

### **Stress:**

- Stress is the body's response to any demand or change. In today's modern world, common sources of stress range from daily events such as a traffic jam, or work or school deadlines to major life events, such as a wedding, new job or loss of a family member. Having a baby in the NICU is definitely grounds for stress levels to rise. Try to find things that help you reduce anxiety/stress as everyone is different. You can try yoga, meditation, reading, praying, or even just talking about your stressors out loud to someone that you trust.