

9 benefits of better sleep

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/13/brain-sleep-classify-words-study_n_5812012.html

You'll Look Prettier

Sleeping beauty had this one right: regular shuteye alone actually makes you look prettier, according to a 2010 [study published in the *British Medical Journal*](#).

The researchers took photos of 23 people after a normal night's sleep of eight hours and after a period of sleep deprivation. Then, a group of 65 people rated each set of photos for perceived health, attractiveness and tiredness. The sleep deprived group scored lower in all three categories.

"We propose that sleep is a cheap and effective beauty treatment, both acutely and in the long-term," John Axelsson, [lead researcher on the study, told NBC News](#). "Sleep should be seen as the body's natural beauty treatment and a clear alternative or complement to other beauty treatments."

Sleep can also actually help to keep your skin in top condition. Over the long term, sleep deprivation can cause increased stress-related aging, a decreased ability to stay hydrated and a decreased ability to fight off environmental pollutants, [writes Elizabeth Tanzi, M.D. on DoctorOz.com](#).

"The most important thing you can do for your skin may be getting a great night's sleep," dermatologist Dr. Howard Murad [told the *Los Angeles Times*](#).

You'll Eat Less

Both [experts](#) and [scientific data](#) have long connected lack of sleep with increased hunger and weight gain -- and now a recent study has quantified the phenomenon. The findings, presented last month at an American Heart Association meeting, suggest that otherwise healthy people may eat more than 500 additional calories a day when they're sleep deprived, [the Huffington Post reported](#) when the study first came out.

You'll Make Better Decisions

Stumped? You may want to sleep on it.

A study published last year in the *Journal of Sleep Research* found that [people make smarter calls](#) after a good night's sleep. The researchers asked 54 young adults to play a card game aimed to imitate casino gambling. Those who were well-rested made decisions that resulted in greater winnings four times more often than those who were sleep deprived -- and they had a firmer grasp on the rules.

"This provides support for what Mom and Dad have always advised," lead author and

psychologist Rebecca Spencer, of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, [said in a statement](#). "There is something to be gained from taking a night to sleep on it when you're facing an important decision. We found that the fact that you slept makes your decisions better."

You Can Ease Bad Memories

If you're sorting through a painful memory, try giving it a rest.

One small study last year found that sleep might help to [take the edge off difficult emotional experiences](#) that happen during your waking hours.

"The dream stage of sleep, based on its unique neurochemical composition, provides us with a form of overnight therapy, a soothing balm that removes the sharp edges from the prior day's emotional experiences," senior author Matthew Walker, associate professor of psychology and neuroscience at UC Berkeley [said in a statement](#).

You Could Learn Better

You may be conditioned to think that the best way to learn is to stay up all night cramming, but the truth is that you'd be better off to get some sleep.

[Several studies](#) have linked rest with increased performance on [learning-related tasks](#), and now a new study has found that the timing of sleep may matter, too.

[The researchers](#) asked more than 200 people to memorize related words (such as "fire and smoke") and unrelated words (think: "insect and truth"). When later tested for recall, those who slept just after learning performed better than those who went a whole day before sleeping.

You Can Be More Organized

Ever notice how you can read the same paragraph over and over again when you're tired, without ever really retaining anything? That same phenomenon can result in your home or work-space becoming cluttered, explains Robert Oexman, D.C., director of the [Sleep to Live Institute](#) in Joplin, Mo. When humans are sleepy, they can lack the focus and drive to stay on task long enough to keep things orderly.

"Sleep-deprived people can't focus very well," he told The Huffington Post. "A lot of things are cluttered in their lives and they find themselves less organized."

It's the oldest excuse in the book: "Honey, I'm too tired." And while there's certainly some truth to being too exhausted to have sex, Oexman believes there's something deeper at work here. Chronic sleep deprivation can take a mental toll that affects how people perceive their own attractiveness and, in turn, sexual desire.

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You'll Have A Better Sex Life

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You'll Be Easier To Get Along With

We all know a bad night's sleep can make us grumpy. And over time, that can take a real toll on your personality.

"People who don't sleep well tend to over-escalate a problem," Oexman says. In fact, one study even found that [sleep deprived people could be more likely to blame other people](#) and plan revenge against them.

"Sleepier people seem to engage in counterfactual thinking that is more dissatisfied and perhaps more selfish," study author David Mastin, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, [said in a statement](#). "It may be that the sleepier you are, the more likely your musings are to be angry thoughts about how others could have done better."

So if you can't stop thinking how everyone else is to blame, you might want to pause to consider how many hours you've been clocking in bed each night.

Your Immunity Will Be Boosted

It's pretty much common sense that if you're rundown or exhausted, you'll be more susceptible to picking up a bad cold. But a recent study helped to explain that link further. As The Huffington Post reported [when the findings were released](#):

Researchers found that the body's circadian clock controls an essential immune system gene in mice -- a gene that helps the body ward off bacteria and viruses.

"People intuitively know that when their sleep patterns are disturbed, they are more likely to get sick," study author Erol Fikrig, professor of epidemiology at the Yale School of Medicine, said in a press release. "It does appear that disruptions of the circadian clock influence our susceptibility to pathogens."

