

## *Why Sleep Matters*

# THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SLEEP AND OVERALL WELL-BEING

Healthy sleep is a fundamental part of overall health and general well-being. **CDC data suggest that more than one third of U.S. adults may be chronically sleep-deprived.** Insufficient sleep – or short sleep -- has been linked to the development and progression of certain chronic diseases and conditions, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, and depression. Despite the increased prevalence of several sleep problems in recent years, sleep and sleep disorders remain an underappreciated public health problem.

**Sleep is essential for adolescent development and health.** Children and adolescents who do not get enough sleep have a higher risk for a variety of health problems, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, poor mental health, and injuries. Children who do not get adequate sleep are also more likely to have attention and behavior problems, contributing to poor performance in school. A number of studies have indicated associations between reduced sleep and poorer academic performance, as well as underdevelopment in the areas of the brain related to emotional control and executive function.

**A plethora of chronic illnesses have been linked to and exacerbated by poor quality of sleep.** Poor sleep quality can lead to fatigue, excessive daytime sleepiness, cognitive disturbance, and depression. It also has been linked to exacerbation of, and even an association with the development of, chronic illnesses such as diabetes, obesity, depression, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, stroke, cancer, and all-cause mortality.

**Between 50 and 70 million Americans experience chronic, treatable sleep disorders**, including obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), which causes brief interruptions of breathing during sleep, insomnia, narcolepsy, and restless legs syndrome. Many Americans have untreated OSA, which is a serious, potentially life-threatening condition. Not surprisingly, a recent study shows that Medicare beneficiaries with untreated OSA have greater health care utilization and higher annual health care costs across all points of service.

**Healthy sleep needs to be restored in the U.S.** The average nightly sleep duration for adults in the United States is more than an hour less than it was in the 1940s. Furthermore, 50% of people aged 55 years and older report problems with their routine sleep schedule. Additionally, a large-scale monitoring of adolescent sleep from 1991 to 2012 in the U.S. indicates a historical shortening of adolescent sleep, with today's adolescents more likely to experience insufficient sleep than they did 20 years ago. There is a need for more formal sleep education in schools, clinical practice, inpatient and long-term care, public health promotion, and the workplace.

## **ASK: Join the Congressional Sleep Caucus**

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