Most Americans Wake Up Exhausted

Why that's a problem and what you can do about it.

June 25, 2020 By Michael Breus, PhD

There are few things more frustrating than waking up exhausted. After all, isn't that the entire point of sleeping — to wake up feeling rejuvenated and ready to tackle the day?

But unfortunately, that isn't the case for most Americans. A recent study conducted by OnePoll found 65% of Americans say they rarely wake up feeling rested and energized. That's nearly two out of three people walking around. Yikes.

That might sound harmless for the most part, but sleep deprivation, one of the key reasons people wake up feeling lethargic, can lead to real health consequences.

Fortunately, there are a few ways to improve your sleep and curb that tired feeling in the morning. If you're one of the millions of Americans who rarely feels rested and energized, don't stop reading now. Let's dive in a bit deeper, look at why this is a problem, and review some tips on how to feel more energized in the morning.

Survey Says: Poor Sleep Leads to Drop in Productivity, Bad Mood

OnePoll, a marketing research company based in London, conducted an online survey of 2,000 American adults and how they usually feel when they wake up in the morning. The results were unsettling.

For example, 42% of Americans said they feel tired by noon each day. In other words, by lunchtime, they're already needing to take a nap! And for the nearly two-thirds of respondents mentioned above who said they feel rarely well-rested, 74% said daytime sleepiness impacts their productivity.

On top of that, approximately 50% of the respondents said they're usually in a bad mood due to poor sleep.

What's the driving force behind these results? Sleep deprivation, which occurs when someone doesn't get enough sleep to feel alert and well-rested. About half of the survey's respondents said they're not sleeping enough.

And that makes sense, considering the survey results closely mirror the common signs of sleep deprivation. If you're not familiar with sleep deprivation, here are a few common symptoms:

- Irritability
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Memory lapses
- A hard time learning new concepts or processing information
- Reduced sex drive
- Clumsiness

Left alone, sleep deprivation can lead to even worse health consequences.

Sleep Deprivation Makes You Accident Prone and More Vulnerable to Illness

First off, multiple studies have shown sleep deprivation leads people to being more accident-prone. That doesn't mean you're a little more likely to stub your toe on the coffee table, either. Sleep deprivation increases your risk of serious injuries or death.

One study, published in the journal Sleep in 2018, found drivers who slept for six hours the previous night were 30% more likely to be responsible for a car crash, compared to people who got 7-9 hours of sleep the night before. For drivers who reported five hours of sleep the night before, the data was even more stark, showing a 90% higher likelihood to be responsible for a crash. And for those running on only four hours of sleep, they're nearly three times as likely to be responsible for a crash.

Fatigue is also a prime factor when it comes to injuring yourself at work. Workers who are very sleepy are 70% more likely to injure themselves on the job, according to The National Sleep Foundation. In short: you're more accident-prone because sleep deprivation diminishes your alertness.

Sleep deprivation also hurts our body's ability to fight back against illnesses. That's because sleep critically fosters T Cell production; T Cells are white blood cells that play a big part in the immune system's response to viruses. Their activation allows the immune system to attack and destroy virus-carrying cells. But research has shown insufficient sleep curtails T Cell production — and puts us at greater risk of getting sick. With the coronavirus going around, that's the last thing we need.

Researchers from the University of California pointed to a similar pattern. Participants who reported at least seven hours of sleep each night were much less likely to catch the common cold, while those averaging six hours of sleep or less during the week were 4.2 times more likely to catch a cold.

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