

City of Milwaukee

Employee Assistance Program

Tips for Changing Sleep Schedule

We all have an internal clock that controls our sleep-wake cycle. This Internal clock is called the *Circadian Rhythm*.

The Circadian Rhythm is largely affected by exposure to light and darkness.

Light promotes the release of *Serotonin*, a hormone that boosts energy. Darkness promotes the release of *Melatonin*, a hormone that causes drowsiness.

USE OF LIGHT

1. Using bright lights before and during work may help you feel more awake.
2. Exposure to bright light will shift your Circadian Rhythm later, which may help you adjust to an upcoming shift.

USE OF DARKNESS

1. If leaving work during daylight hours, minimize sun & light exposure to your eyes. This prevents the "daytime" clock from activating and keeping you awake when you need to go home and sleep.
2. Create a dark sleeping environment.
3. Limit light exposure at least 2 hours before sleep (especially blue light emitted from computer

screens and mobile devices because it suppresses Melatonin).

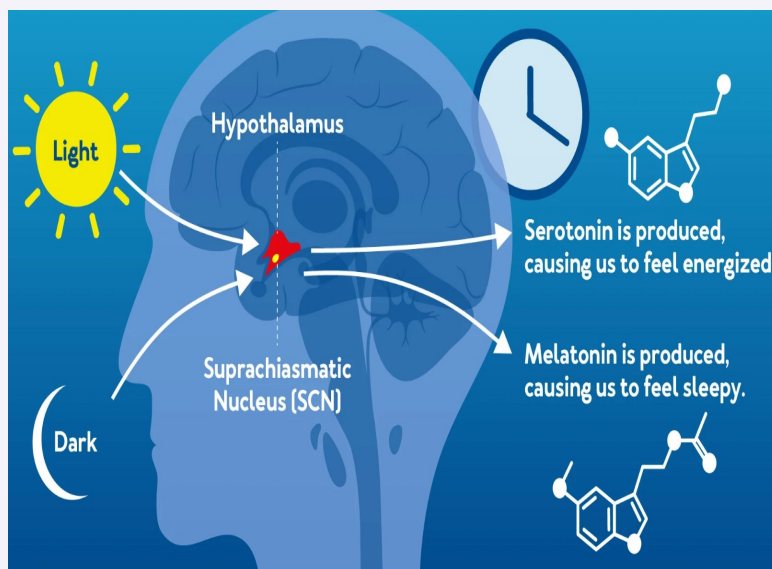
SLEEP HYGIENE

1. Limit caffeine intake 4 hours before sleep.
2. Limit alcohol. Alcohol disrupts sleep because the body stays active processing it.
3. Keep a routine before sleep, even during non-work hours.
4. Use bed for sleep. No reading, watching TV or electronics in bed.
5. Wind down before sleep. Avoid mentally and physically stimulating tasks leading up to sleep.

AVOID THE SNOOZE BUTTON

We experience cycles of sleep, each lasting 90-110 minutes. These cycles range from light sleep to deep sleep. The deep sleep cycle is called REM (Rapid Eye movement).

To feel rested we need to spend enough time in the REM cycle, which is the most restful sleep, but the last phase in the sleep cycle. Waking up and falling back asleep after pressing snooze disrupts our ability to enter and complete a REM cycle. Disrupting REM fragments the most important part of the sleep cycle which is why we wake up feeling groggy and less alert than if we would have not pressed the snooze button at all.



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Holiday Stress And Weight Gain

When we experience stress our bodies release a hormone called *cortisol* which can increase appetite and cravings for unhealthy foods—especially sugary and fatty foods found in holiday “*comfort foods*.” This can lead to overeating and weight gain.

Additionally, stress can disrupt our sleep patterns and lack of sleep has been shown to contribute to weight gain as well.

Lack of sleep not only leads to feelings of fatigue and decreased motivation for physical activity, but it also disrupts the hormonal balance in our bodies that regulate hunger and satiety. When we are sleep-deprived, our bodies produce more *ghrelin*, the hunger hormone, and less *leptin*, the hormone that signals fullness.

Lastly, stress can lead to weight gain through unhealthy coping mechanisms such as emotional eating.

Many individuals turn to food as a way to manage and cope with stress. Emotional eating involves consuming food not out of physical hunger, but rather to soothe or numb emotions. This often leads to overeating, especially foods high in calories, sugar, and fat.

Understanding how stress impacts our bodies and our eating habits is crucial in maintaining a healthy weight during the holidays. By recognizing the effects of stress on our appetite, sleep, and coping mechanisms, we can better manage and mitigate the negative impact of stress on our overall wellbeing. It is important to develop healthy strategies for managing stress during the holidays. Take time for exercise, meditate, and seek support from friends, family, or counselors. This can help prevent holiday weight gain and promote a balanced and healthy lifestyle into the new year.

EAP Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to assist employees who develop behavioral/emotional problems that may directly affect their work performance, and to provide Key Personnel with policy and procedural guidelines for the management of these problems.

Wellness Resources

- For information about current Wellness programs and services, visit: www.milwaukee.gov/WYCM
- The City’s Workplace Clinic provides free, convenient, onsite and virtual health care services for employees and spouses regardless of enrollment in the City’s health insurance and dependents (18 mos and older) on the City’s health insurance. Call 414-777-3413 to schedule an in-person or virtual visit.
- The City of Milwaukee Employee Assistance Program web page houses topical information and resources on a wide range of work-life issues. Visit: <https://city.milwaukee.gov/DER/EAP>
- The City of Milwaukee offers a free Care.com membership through Care@Work to employees. A Care.com membership provides unlimited access to a platform employees can use to find and manage care for children, seniors, pets and their home. Visit www.milwaukee.gov/careatwork to learn more.

Managing The Holidays

The holiday season is meant to be a joyful and relaxing time, but sometimes it can become overwhelming and stressful. Here are a few tips to help you manage holiday stress.

First, it's essential to stay organized and plan ahead. Make a to-do list and break then break it down into smaller steps. Don't be afraid to delegate tasks to others. Family members and friends are often more than willing to help, and sharing the responsibilities can alleviate the stress on your shoulders.

Second, set realistic expectations. Focus on creating meaningful memories rather than trying to live up to unrealistic standards. It's okay to simplify.

Third, make sure to take care of yourself both physically and mentally. The holiday season can be demanding so it's important to prioritize self-care. Get enough sleep, eat nutritious meals, and engage in regular exercise.

Taking breaks and making time for activities that bring you joy or help you relax can also be incredibly helpful. Whether it's enjoying a quiet walk outdoors, reading a book, or listening to your favorite music, remember that self-care is essential for managing stress effectively.

Managing holiday stress is all about being organized, setting realistic expectations, and practicing self-care. By planning ahead, delegating tasks, and understanding that you don't have to do everything, you can alleviate some of the pressures that come with the holiday season. Remember to prioritize self-care. It is as crucial for your overall well-being as spending quality time with loved ones.