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concepts for employees

The Sleep Hygiene Audit



Nothing is worse than hearing your alarm go off in the morning after a sleepless night. Your eyelids are heavy, your body moves in slow motion, and your brain is blanketed in a thick fog. Let's just say you are not "at your best." While mainstream media may lead you to believe that a healthy diet and regular exercise are the primary inputs into maintaining a healthy lifestyle, this simply isn't the case. You would be missing a vital component – [sleep hygiene](#). Both the quantity and

quality of sleep you get directly affect your mental and physical health. Performing a simple sleep hygiene audit of your environment and daily habits can help you assess whether you are setting yourself up for bedtime success.

Start by examining the room you regularly sleep in. As you crawl into bed, is your room dark and free of distractions? A dark room signals to your brain that it is time for rest – an important cue to keep your circadian rhythms running on schedule. A distraction-free environment means your TV is turned off and electronics that beep, ping and vibrate are removed from your bedroom (smart phone, laptop and iPad, thank you very much!). Temperature is another important component of a healthy sleep sanctuary. The National Sleep Foundation recommends keeping your room cool (try 67 degrees Fahrenheit). If this sounds icy, use your judgement! The key is to pick a temperature that is comfortably cool for you.

Now that your bedroom is fine-tuned for sleeping success, look at your daily habits. Are you getting regular exercise? Scientists agree that aerobic exercise improves sleep quality as long as you are not scheduling your sweat session too close to bedtime. Those who have a hard time falling asleep or wake up feeling less than well rested should avoid drinking caffeinated beverages after noon.



Sleep enthusiasts should also pay attention to the time they go to sleep and wake up as your body likes a consistent sleep schedule. Try implementing a bedtime regardless of the day of the week or the plans on your calendar. And please, please, do not make naps an everyday occurrence! Napping can make it difficult to sleep later in the day and breaking up your sleep cycle is less restorative for your brain (which does a lot of hard work night). If you find an occasion that calls for a nap, take it early in the afternoon and keep it short.

If your sleep has been less than stellar, take a few minutes to [assess your sleep hygiene](#). A look at your surroundings and routines may point out a few meaningful areas for improvement to help you get the most from your zzzs. You just may find that getting better sleep causes a domino effect of improvement in your overall physical and mental health.

This newsletter contains general health and financial wellness information and is not a substitute for your doctor's care. You should consult an appropriate health care professional for your specific needs. Some treatments mentioned in this newsletter may not be covered by your health plan. Please refer to your benefit plan documents for information about coverage.

Lighter Baked Macaroni and Cheese Makes 8 servings

This creamy baked macaroni and cheese recipe is a lighter version of the classic recipe with added fiber from spinach. It's comfort food at its finest!

INGREDIENTS

12 oz elbow macaroni, wheat or whole wheat
2 tbsp butter
1/4 cup flour
1/4 cup minced onion
2 cups skim milk
1 cup chicken or vegetable broth
8 oz reduced fat cheddar, for best results shred yourself
salt and pepper
4 cups baby spinach
2 tbsp grated Parmesan
1/4 cup seasoned whole wheat breadcrumbs
olive oil spray

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook pasta in salted water according to package directions. Spray a baking dish with buttered flavor cooking spray.
2. Preheat oven to 375F°.
3. In a large, heavy skillet, melt butter. Add flour and cook over low heat stirring with a whisk.
4. Add onion and cook another 2 minutes. Add milk and chicken broth and continue whisking, raising heat to medium-high until it comes to a boil and becomes smooth and thick. Season with salt and pepper.
5. Once it becomes thick, remove from heat, add cheese 1/4 cup at a time and mix well until cheese is melted. Adjust salt and pepper to taste, add cooked macaroni and baby spinach.
6. Pour into baking dish. Top with grated cheese and breadcrumbs. Spray a little more oil on top.
7. Bake for 15-20 minutes, then broil for a few minutes to get the breadcrumbs golden.



NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Calories: 260
Fat: 7.5g
Saturated Fat: 4g
Protein: 13g
Carbohydrates: 36.5g
Sodium: 277mg
Fiber: 5.5g

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Total Time: 50 minutes