The Importance of Getting Your ZzZ’s

By Brittany Brady ’14

When it comes to improving overall health, many people focus their attention on altering diet and exercise habits. While these are both important aspects of achieving optimal wellness, perhaps an even more important part of the equation, sleep, is often overlooked. The average person spends around 36 percent of their life sleeping. So, if one lives to be 90, that individual will spend roughly 32 years of their life fully asleep. That’s a lot of time; too much to just ignore. It should come as no surprise then that much research has been devoted to understanding why we sleep and what role sleep plays in maintaining health and wellbeing.

One possible explanation is the restoration hypothesis. This theory considers sleep to be essential to body and brain tissue repair. A recent study published in Science provides evidence to suggest the brain ‘cleans’ itself during sleep by expanding channels between neurons and allowing potentially neurotoxic waste products that accumulate in the central nervous system to be released. We know that too much exercise in relation to rest can lead to the detrimental effects of overtraining. So sleep almost certainly plays a role in allowing the body to repair and rebuild muscle and bone after strenuous activity.

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Finally, the idea that sleep serves to enhance brain processing and memory consolidation has also been a recent topic of discussion and debate. Proponents of this theory believe that sleep plays a vital role in allowing the brain to process learned information and increases our ability to produce solutions to problems encountered during the day. Next time you are stumped by a complex problem, sleep on it and see what creative, new ideas you have the following day.

Suffice it to say, sleep is important. In fact, sleep is so essential to proper brain functioning and good overall health, that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now considers insufficient sleep a public health epidemic. So while the occasional “sleepless” night will inevitably arise, it is important to take notice if chronic sleep loss becomes a habit.

Unfortunately, a full one-third of American adults are sleeping less than six hours each night. When individuals experience chronic sleep loss, the subsequent health effects can be significant. From poor memory and creativity to increased impulsiveness and overall poor judgment. The list of mental health consequences associated with sleep deprivation is lengthy. Research has connected a lack of sleep with decreased immune system functioning due to a reduction in antibody production. Other studies from the University of Chicago have shown that hormonal and metabolic systems can also be affected.

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Holiday Happiness and Health
The holidays are a time when we are reminded to give thanks, express gratitude and make amends. While some of us may be counting our calories and others our blessings, an attitude of thankfulness and forgiveness can actually bring multiple physical and mental health benefits. From protection against long-term stress to decreased blood pressure, various studies have associated forgiveness with a reduction in feelings of stress, tension, anger, and more. It can help with that sleepiness too! A 2005 publication in the Journal of Behavioral Medicine found forgiveness to be associated with better sleep quality.


Sniffles or Chills Got You Down?
The cold and flu season is now creeping up on us. Although you may experience a lack of appetite while sick, it is important to keep in mind that your body needs fuel so that it can work to fight infection. Studies have found that reduction of calorie consumption may actually worsen symptoms and lengthen the duration of illness. In order to keep your body well-nourished and hydrated, try eating smaller portions of food more frequently. Broth-based soups, citrus fruits, bananas, ginger, and crackers are all foods that can help settle the stomach or combat a cold.


GETTING YOUR ZZ'S — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
which may speed up the onset and increase severity of diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity. How much sleep is needed to avoid these issues is also the subject of debate.

The general rule of thumb for a productive night of sleep is seven to nine hours, though the amount of sleep that an individual needs varies by age and may be different for those with diverse lifestyle habits. Ultimately, it is most important to listen to your body's cues in order to determine how much sleep it takes you to feel completely rested. If you notice that you are particularly irritable, take an increased amount of time to get up from bed, or rely on a lot of stimulants such as coffee to get you through the day, those may be signs that you are not getting enough sleep.

Both quality and length of sleep are critical to a healthy body. Although it may be hard to squeeze in a full night of sleep with our busy schedules, the benefits are apparent. Giving your body the amount of sleep that it needs can increase concentration, attention levels, decision-making abilities, creativity, social skills, and more.

In order to consistently satisfy your body's sleep requirement it is important to notice what hindrances might keep you from doing so. Following is a list of suggestions to help you experience a deep and restful night of sleep.
1. Invest in a good mattress.
2. Wake up at the same time every morning. Even on weekends!
3. Never hit the snooze button. Try positioning your

alarm in a place where you’ll have to physically roll out from under the covers to turn it off.
4. Expose yourself to bright light as soon as you get up. Bright light triggers our brains to stop releasing the sleep hormone melatonin and begin producing the hormone cortisol, which increases alertness.
5. Exercise daily.
6. Avoid caffeine late in the day. Caffeine has the ability to linger in your body for up to 12 hours and may hamper your ability to fall asleep.
7. Avoid blue light in the evening and reduce the amount of light exposure you have in general. Bright lights or blue lights from digital screens can disrupt our body's natural release of the sleep hormone melatonin.
8. Have a regular bedtime routine. A consistent bedtime routine—such as taking a hot shower or drinking a warm glass of chamomile tea before bed—can serve as a cue to your body and mind to start getting sleepy.
9. Avoid alcohol and sleeping pills to help you fall asleep. While these may help you fall asleep faster, they can diminish your quality of sleep.
10. If you can’t fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up. Try moving to another room and reading until you feel sleepy. It is important not to associate the anxiety and frustration of not being able to fall asleep with your bed.
11. Make sure your bedroom is slightly cool, quiet, and very dark. While some prefer a quiet environment, others may want to try adding white noise to your room while you sleep.
12. Try progressive muscle relaxation. To do this, begin by lying down in bed. Tense and relax each and every muscle group in your body starting with your toes and working up to your shoulders. This technique has been known to calm the mind and release tension in the muscles.

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COOKIE BAKEOFF — CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE
to the holiday season, and “Anything Goes” which requires only that the entry is a cookie of some sort. Each participant can enter one batch of cookies, so make it your absolute best! All are welcome to enter and encouraged to taste! Milk will be provided, as will prizes for each category!

For those of you who would like a special challenge, we are looking for some bakers who bake great gluten free (sub category of Anything Goes) cookies! Add that to the mix!

To enter the Cookie Bakeoff, please contact Wellness no later than December 3. Let us know what category you would like to enter and the name of your cookie recipe. We ask that you submit a recipe or list of ingredients (if recipe is a secret) so that it may be displayed with your cookies in case of food allergies or sensitivities.

Contact Wellness at 556-3334 or wellness@iwu.edu.
Recipes of the Month

When it comes to Thanksgiving, it’s all about the side dishes. Both of the recipes below can be made in advance. The cornbread stuffing is my once a year favorite. And I realize that the sucking slurp that accompanies the release of the typical canned cranberry sauce is, for many, a reminiscence that will be difficult to let go, but I encourage you to try. It is certainly worth the little extra effort!

Sausage and Cornbread Stuffing

Makes about 12 cups, serving 10 to 12+

In this recipe, the stuffing is baked outside of the turkey in a baking dish.

To keep Turkey day form getting too hectic, make the stuffing a day in advance, by increasing both the stock and half-and-half by roughly ¼ cup each, cover and refrigerate the unbaked stuffing 12 to 24 hours. Before transferring to baking dish, let the stuffing stand at room temperature for about 30 minutes, or until stuffing loses its chill.

For Stuffing:

1. Place the cornbread in a large bowl (the larger the better—the huge Tupperware works well). Whisk together stock, half-and-half, and eggs in a medium bowl. Pour over cornbread and toss VERY gently just to coat—try not to break the cubes into smaller pieces. Set aside.
2. Heat a heavy-bottomed 12” skillet over med-high heat, until hot. Add 2 Tbsp butter and swirl to coat pan. When foaming subsides, add the sausage and cook until it loses its raw color, about 5-7 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the sausage to a medium bowl. Add about half the onions and celery to the fat in the skillet; sauté, stirring occasionally, over medium-high heat until softened, about 5 minutes. Transfer onion mixture to the bowl with the sausage. Return the skillet to the heat and add the remaining 6 Tbsp butter, when the foam subsides, add the sausage and cook until it loses its raw color, about 5-7 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the sausage to a medium bowl. Add about half the onions and celery to the fat in the skillet; sauté, stirring occasionally, over medium-high heat until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in the thyme, sage, and garlic; cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds; add the salt and pepper. Add this mixture along with the sausage, cranberries and onion mixture to the cornbread and stir gently to combine so that cornbread does not break into pieces. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate up to 7 days; let stand at room temperature 30 minutes before serving.

For Golden Cornbread:

(Makes about 16 cups crumbled cornbread, you will use only ⅔ of the recipe)

4 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted, preferable stone-ground
plus extra for greasing the baking dish
4 large eggs
4 cups buttermilk
2 cups yellow cornmeal
2 cups half-and-half
2 large eggs, beaten lightly
8 tablespoons (1 stick) butter, (about 3 cups)
plus extra for greasing baking dish
1 ½ pounds bulk pork sausage
(not breakfast sausage), broken in 1” pieces (I have also used Mexican chorizo)
1 cup of dried cranberries
3 medium onions, chopped fine

2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

Instructions:

1. Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 375 degrees. Grease a 9” by 13” baking dish with butter.
2. Beat the eggs in a medium bowl; whisk in the buttermilk and milk.
3. Whisk the dry ingredients together in a large bowl.
   Make a well in the center and pour the egg/milk mixture into the well. Stir with a whisk until just combined. Stir in the butter.
4. Pour batter into the greased baking dish. Bake until the top is golden brown and the edges have pulled away from the sides of the pan, 30 to 40 minutes.
5. Transfer the baking dish to a wire rack and cool to room temperature before using, about 1 hour.

Simple Cranberry Sauce

Makes 2 ¾ cups

INGREDIENTS

¾ cup water
1 cup granulated sugar
2 tsp orange zest
¼ teaspoon table salt
1 (12-ounce) bag cranberries, picked through

INSTRUCTIONS

Bring water, sugar, and salt to boil in medium nonreactive saucepan over high heat, stirring occasionally to dissolve sugar. Stir in cranberries; return to boil. Reduce heat to medium; simmer until saucy, slightly thickened, and about two-thirds of berries have popped open, about 5 minutes. Transfer to nonreactive bowl, cool to room temperature, and serve. (Can be covered and refrigerated up to 7 days; let stand at room temperature 30 minutes before serving.)

Adapted from Cook’s Illustrated.
ON-SITE HEALTH HAPPENINGS AT IWU

On-Site Flu Shot Clinic
Wednesday, November 12
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Hansen Student Center

IWU will again sponsor a clinic for seasonal flu shots for faculty, staff, retirees and dependents.

As an employee participating in the IWU health insurance plan, the cost of the flu shot will be processed through the plan at no cost to you. Your dependents, age 18 years and older, are also eligible for a flu shot. If dependents are covered by the IWU health insurance plan, there is no cost.

If you or your dependents are not covered by the IWU health insurance plan, the cost is $25.00 and is payable by check or cash (must be exact change) at the time of the shot. This is a drop-in format, no appointment necessary.

On-Site Digital Mammography
Wednesday, December 10

A routine exam by a health professional, plus monthly self-exams and mammograms at the appropriate intervals for your age, are good ways to check the health of your breasts and to detect problems early. The earlier a problem is detected, the more easily and successfully it can be treated.

Women’s Health at Methodist Medical Center offers an invaluable service, On-Site Digital Mammography. They have come to the Illinois Wesleyan campus for almost two decades offering a convenient screening program.

The Service includes the screening and radiology report, which is then sent to your personal physician for evaluation. A physician’s referral is required to participate in this service if you are under the age of 40.

This service is covered under the IWU health plan; if you are a participant, there is no charge to you.

For more information, or to make an appointment, please call Wellness at 556-3334. Appointments will be made from 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

WELLNESS FUN!

Back by popular demand!
6th Annual Cookie Bakeoff!
Friday, December 5
Noon–1:00 p.m.
Hansen Center Court

The Wellness program is sponsoring another cookie event this holiday season because being “well” includes having fun and indulging occasionally! Yeah!

This year there will be three main categories, “Ultimate Chocolate” including any cookie with chocolate as a main ingredient, such as chocolate chips, cocoa, chocolate candy etc., “Holiday Cookies” including any cookie unique — CONTINUED ON PAGE 2