



Napping – Helpful or Not?

Siesta. Mittagspause. Wujiao. Power Nap. No matter what it is called, taking a brief rest mid-day is a practice well known around the world. Catching up on sleep sounds like a good idea, yet should busy executives make time for a quick snooze during the day?

Absolutely. Since job stress and sleep deprivation seems to plague many busy executives - who often clock in less than 6 hours a night - napping can be a good option. You already know that your body needs 7-8 hours of sleep per day. If you don't get this amount day after day, you start building a cumulative "bank" of sleep deprivation. After several days of lost sleep, this sleep deficit begins to cause serious problems - impairing everything from reaction time, judgment and short-term memory to vision, patience and motivation. Sleep deprived people are known to show more aggressiveness, moodiness and even job burnout.

To offset this sleep loss, taking a brief daily nap can restore health – and even reduce stress. Studies have shown that 20 minutes of sleep in the afternoon provides more rest than 20 minutes more sleep in the morning. In fact, researchers have found that a regular napper who rests about 30 minutes or longer is 37 percent less likely to die from heart disease than non-nappers. Further, people who occasionally took a quick snooze for less than 30 minutes had a 12 percent lower risk than people who never napped. Naps are shown to be even more healthful for working executives than retirees. Because job stress is linked to many health problems – including more susceptibility to high blood pressure, diabetes and even the flu virus, regular napping can help offset the stress caused by a hectic career as well as reduce a sleep deficit.

What's the best length of time for a nap? It's important to consider the sleep cycle which has different stages including light sleep, deep sleep - which is believed to be the stage in which the body repairs itself, and rapid-eye movement sleep, or REM sleep - during which the mind is repaired. If you have time, a 1-hour nap is the most restorative and provides a much greater improvement in cognitive functioning. If you keep your nap between 15 and 30 minutes, you will avoid going into deeper stages of sleep, making it easier to wake up and avoid feeling groggy. For the truly time crunched, just closing your eyes for a few minutes has the benefit of reducing stress and helping you relax, this meditative moment will help restore more energy to complete daily tasks.



Proper rest is critical to good health. If you aren't getting enough sleep, or struggle with tiredness during the day, call your doctor at Executive MD for recommendations for a better sleep schedule.

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