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Healthy LIVING

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Pros and Cons of Bariatric Surgery

BY GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

For people who struggle to lose weight, bariatric surgery can feel like a miracle procedure.

Bariatric surgery helps individuals with severe obesity lose weight by altering the digestive system. It's often recommended for those who have not been able to achieve significant weight loss through diet, exercise or medications. With obesity rates on the rise, bariatric surgery has become a common option for people looking to improve their health and quality of life.

Types of Bariatric Surgery

There are several types of bariatric surgery, the most common being gastric bypass, sleeve gastrectomy and adjustable gastric banding. Gastric bypass, one of the oldest procedures, involves creating a small pouch at the top of the stomach and rerouting the small intestine to this pouch. Sleeve gastrectomy reduces the size of the stomach by about 80%, limiting food intake. Adjust-



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able gastric banding involves placing a band around the upper part of the stomach to create a smaller stomach pouch, though this procedure is now less common due to lower long-term success rates compared to other methods.

These surgeries restrict the amount of food the stomach can hold, leading to a signif-

icant reduction in calorie intake. Some procedures, like gastric bypass, also affect how the body absorbs nutrients.

Who Is a Candidate?

Bariatric surgery is typically recommended for people with a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher or those with a BMI of 35 or higher who have

serious obesity-related health issues. Candidates must commit to making lifestyle changes, including long-term dietary adjustments and regular physical activity.

Before surgery, patients undergo a thorough evaluation to determine whether they are good candidates. This includes assessments by a surgeon, dietitian and sometimes a mental health professional to ensure the patient is prepared for the challenges of surgery and the post-surgical lifestyle changes.

Benefits

Bariatric surgery can lead to substantial weight loss, often 50-70% of excess body

weight within the first two years after surgery. For many patients, this results in significant improvements in health. Weight loss can also lead to better mobility, increased energy levels and improved quality of life.

The American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery claims that bariatric surgery can reduce the risk of premature death by 30-50% and that it is safer than such surgeries as gallbladder surgery, appendectomy and knee replacement. They cite that many diseases go into remission with type 2 diabetes having a remission rate of 92%, hypertension 75% and obstructive sleep apnea 96%.

Risks

As with any surgery, there are potential complications, including infection, blood clots and adverse reactions to anesthesia. Long-term risks include nutrient deficiencies, especially after procedures like gastric bypass, where nutrient absorption is reduced. Patients must commit to lifelong vitamin and mineral supplementation to prevent deficiencies.

Bariatric surgery requires major lifestyle changes. Patients must follow strict dietary guidelines, starting with a liquid diet post-surgery and gradually reintroducing solid foods. Emotional and psychological support is often necessary, as adjusting to these changes can be challenging.



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How to Find Trustworthy Sources

BY GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

In the digital age, health information is more accessible than ever before.

A quick internet search can yield thousands of results on any health topic, from common cold remedies to complex medical treatments.

However, not all health information online is reliable, and distinguishing between credible sources and misinformation can help you make informed decisions about your health. “Doctor Google” is not as reliable as an actual human doctor.

Dangers of Misinformation

The sheer volume of health-related content on the internet can be overwhelming, and unfortunately, much of it is misleading or outright false. Inaccurate health information can lead to harmful self-diagnosis, improper treatment and increased anxiety. For instance, relying on unverified sources for serious conditions like heart disease or cancer could delay necessary medical intervention.

Misinformation is especially dangerous during public health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when false claims about treatments or vaccines spread quickly. The rise of social media has exacerbated this issue, as posts and videos promoting unproven remedies or conspiracy theories often gain wide circulation.

Identifying Trustworthy Sources

When evaluating health information, consider the source. Reputable health organizations, government websites and peer-reviewed journals are typically the most reliable. Websites like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) offer evidence-based information that experts in the field regularly update.

Medical professionals and academic institutions are credible sources. Websites affiliated with hospitals, universities or healthcare providers often feature articles written or reviewed by doctors, specialists or researchers. Look for information that cites studies published in reputable medical journals, such as “The New England Journal of Medicine” or “The Lancet.”

Evaluating Online Health Information

When reading health information online, always check the author's credentials. Are they a licensed health care professional or an expert in the field? Be cautious of websites that lack transparency about their authors or do not clearly explain their qualifications.

Pay attention to tone and language. Trustworthy sources rely on facts and evidence, not fearmongering or sensational claims. If a website promises quick fixes, miracle cures or has a commercial interest in selling a product, it's best to approach the information with skepticism.

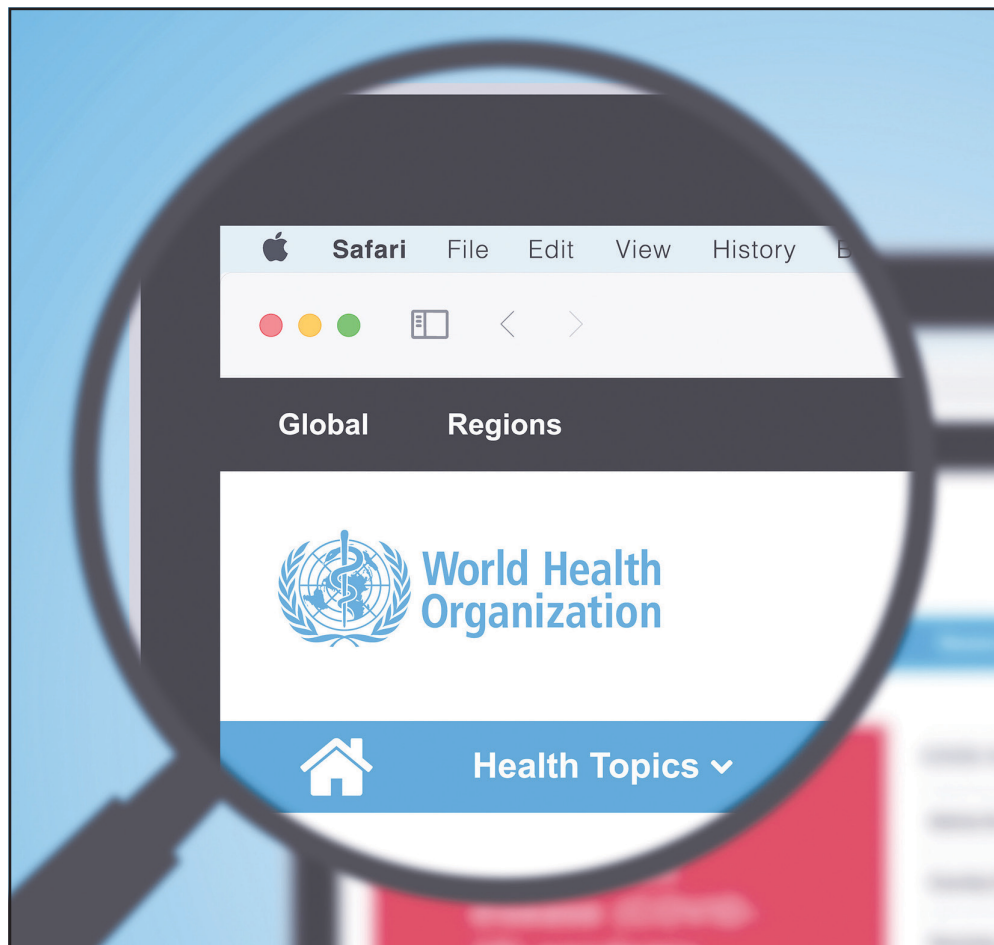
Check the publication date, as health recommendations and guidelines can change over time. Outdated information may no longer be relevant or accurate, especially as new research and treatments emerge.

The National Library of Medicine offers a free tutorial on evaluating online health information at medlineplus.gov/webeval/EvaluatingInternetHealthInformationTutorial.pdf

Consult a Professional

Finally, while online research can provide helpful background information, it's no substitute for professional medical advice.

Always consult with a health care provider before making decisions about your health, particularly when it comes to diagnosing conditions or starting new treatments.



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Managing Life with OCD

BY GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

While many people make jokes about obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), the symptoms aren't amusing to those who have to live with the condition.

Thankfully, with the right coping strategies, those affected can learn to manage symptoms and lead fulfilling lives.

OCD is a chronic mental health condition characterized by unwanted, intrusive thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviors (compulsions) aimed at relieving the anxiety those thoughts cause. While there is no cure, several approaches can help people cope with the daily challenges of OCD.

Understanding OCD

OCD affects millions of people worldwide and can interfere with daily

routines, relationships, and overall well-being. Individuals with OCD may experience compulsions like repeated handwashing, checking, or counting in an attempt to alleviate their obsessive thoughts. These rituals can become time-consuming, leading to stress and frustration.

Golden Steps ABA, an organization focused on autism, reports that OCD affects one in 40 adults with the average age of onset being 19. Women are more likely than men to have it and about one-third of the people who have OCD also have a tic disorder.

Because OCD is a complex disorder, it's important to work with healthcare professionals to develop a treatment plan tailored to individual needs. Most treatment plans include a combina-

tion of therapy, medication, and self-care strategies.

Golden Steps reports that nearly one-third of people with OCD do not receive treatment. When it goes untreated, people with the condition are at higher risk for substance abuse, depression, eating disorders and anxiety disorders. The NIMH said that 76% of people with OCD have at least one other mental health disorder.

OCD can result from childhood trauma or genetic factors.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

One of the most effective treatments for OCD is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), specifically a technique known as exposure and response prevention (ERP). ERP involves gradually exposing

individuals to situations that trigger their obsessions while preventing them from engaging in compulsive behaviors. Over time, this process can reduce the anxiety associated with obsessive thoughts and lessen the urge to perform rituals.

With the help of a therapist, individuals with OCD learn to confront their fears in a controlled and supportive environment. CBT can take time to show results, but can significantly improve quality of life.

Medication

Medication can be a tool to manage OCD symptoms. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), a class of antidepressants, are commonly prescribed to help regulate serotonin levels in the brain. For many individuals, SSRIs

reduce the intensity of obsessive thoughts and compulsions, making it easier to engage in therapy.

It may take time to find the right dosage and medication that works best.

Self-Care and Coping Strategies

Coping strategies can help manage OCD symptoms. Mindfulness techniques, such as meditation and deep breathing exercises, can reduce anxiety and help individuals stay grounded. Regular physical activity and maintaining a healthy diet also support mental well-being.

Building a support network is equally important. Sharing experiences with family, friends or support groups can ease feelings of isolation and provide emotional support.

The Benefits of Giving Blood

BY GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

Superheroes walk among us, but you won't find them in capes or masks. Instead, they donate life-saving blood to help others.

According to the American Red Cross, a single blood contribution can save as many as three lives. Donations are allowed five times a year, meaning you could potentially end up

impacting hundreds and hundreds of people over the course of your lifetime. Here's more information on how to become a super hero, too.

Inside the Numbers

You might not know, but blood donations are seasonal. The numbers plummet during the busy travel season each summer; inclement weather plays

a role, too. But even on sunny spring days, fewer than 10 percent of those who are eligible actually donate blood, according to the American Red Cross. The non-profit conducts more than 200,000 annual blood drives in an effort to combat this critical shortfall. Some 80 percent of their donations come from mobile sites set up in local communities. The Red

Cross provides blood to some 2,700 hospitals across America.

Why You Should

Depending on your blood type, you might be providing a critical resource for patients who don't have ready access to a badly needed transfusion. (For instance, only seven percent of Americans are O-negative, the so-called universal blood type that can be used by anyone.) In times of crisis, these donations are particularly important.

Medical institutions can be overwhelmed by patient emergencies or surgery-related infusions, requiring a large amount of donor blood. But blood is actually always needed. If you don't know your type, helpful technicians at your hometown blood bank can provide a test.

Building Trust

Hospitals, blood banks and organizations like the Red Cross take precautions when collecting, processing, testing and distributing blood. This ensures your good health through the procedure, but also the safety and effectiveness of the donation once it arrives. Blood is comprehensively analyzed in labs to establish a definitive type, since they can't be mixed, but also to check for infectious diseases. Provided information is kept strictly confidential; none of it can be released without your permission, unless directed by a judge. So whether you're giving blood at in the offices of an area health-care provider or at a Red Cross mobile drive, you can be confident in the process.

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Seasonal Illnesses

BY GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

As winter approaches, respiratory illnesses become more common.

Experts from John Hopkins Medicine explain that because people are indoors more, they spread viruses and cold, dry air can weaken resistance.

With the overlapping symptoms of various conditions, it can be difficult to tell them apart. John Hopkins lists several common winter respiratory concerns — the common cold, flu, COVID-19, RSV, acute and chronic bronchitis, pneumonia, and whooping cough. Here are some cues for recognizing them and taking steps to recover.

Common Cold

Symptoms: Sneezing, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat and mild cough. Fever is rare.

What to do: Rest, stay

hydrated and use over-the-counter (OTC) cold medications to ease symptoms. Colds typically last 7-10 days and don't require medical attention unless symptoms worsen.

Influenza (Flu)

Symptoms: Sudden onset of fever, body aches, chills, fatigue, sore throat and dry cough. Flu can lead to serious complications like pneumonia.

What to do: Rest, hydrate, and take antiviral medication if prescribed by a doctor. If you are in a high-risk group — such as older adults, young children or those with underlying health conditions — seek medical attention for more severe symptoms or complications.

COVID-19

Symptoms: Similar to the flu but may also include loss of taste or smell, shortness

of breath and gastrointestinal issues. Symptoms can range from mild to severe.

What to do: Get tested if you suspect COVID-19. Isolate for the recommended period, rest and monitor symptoms. Seek immediate medical help if you experience difficulty breathing or chest pain.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

Symptoms: RSV presents with cold-like symptoms in adults but can cause severe respiratory distress in infants, young children and older adults. Symptoms include runny nose, cough, wheezing and fever.

What to do: Mild cases resolve with rest and fluids, but more severe cases, particularly in children, may require hospitalization. Contact a health care provider if breathing difficulties arise.

Acute Bronchitis

Symptoms: Often starts with a cold or flu, then develops into a persistent cough with mucus production. Chest discomfort and mild shortness of breath may occur.

What to do: Most cases of acute bronchitis resolve on their own. Rest, drink fluids and use cough suppressants or inhalers if recommended by your doctor. If symptoms persist or worsen, seek medical advice.

Chronic Bronchitis

Symptoms: Long-lasting cough with mucus that persists for at least three months in a year, often seen in smokers.

What to do: Chronic bronchitis requires medical management. Quitting smoking and using prescribed inhalers or bronchodilators can help manage symptoms.

Pneumonia

Symptoms: High fever, cough with mucus, sharp chest pain, and difficulty breathing.

What to do: Pneumonia can be life-threatening, especially for older adults or those with weakened immune systems. Seek medical attention promptly. Treatment typically includes antibiotics or antiviral medications, rest and fluids.

Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

Symptoms: Severe, prolonged coughing fits followed by a “whoop” sound, especially in children. It often starts with cold-like symptoms.

What to do: Whooping cough requires medical treatment. Antibiotics can help shorten the contagious period. Vaccination is key for prevention.

Caring for a Wound or Injury

BY GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

From falling off a bike to cutting oneself in the kitchen, nearly everyone manages to injure themselves at some point in life.

Proper care can keep a minor ouchie from becoming a serious problem.

Caring for a wound or injury prevents infection, reduces pain and promotes faster healing. Whether it's a minor scrape, cut or a more serious injury, taking the right steps at home can make a big difference in recovery.

Clean the Wound

The first step is to clean the affected area thoroughly. Before touching the wound, wash your hands with soap and water to minimize the risk of infection. Wear gloves if you have them.

Rinse the wound with cool water to remove dirt, debris and bacteria. For smaller wounds, use a saline solution or mild soap. For

deeper cuts or puncture wounds, avoid scrubbing, as this can damage the tissue and make things worse. Pat the area dry with a clean cloth or gauze pad.

If there is any debris (like gravel or glass) that won't wash out, seek medical attention. Attempting to remove deeply embedded debris could lead to further injury.

Stop the Bleeding

Most minor wounds will stop bleeding within a few minutes. If the wound is bleeding heavily, apply gentle but firm pressure with a clean bandage or cloth for 5-10 minutes. Elevating the wound above the level of your heart can also help slow the bleeding.

If the bleeding doesn't stop after 10 minutes of pressure or the wound continues to ooze blood, seek medical help immediately. This could indicate a

more serious injury requiring professional treatment, such as stitches.

Apply Antibiotic Ointment

Apply an over-the-counter antibiotic ointment like Neosporin to help reduce the risk of infection. A thin layer of ointment keeps the wound moist, which aids in the healing process.

However, some people may experience minor allergic reactions to these ointments, so if you notice increased redness, itching or swelling, discontinue use and consult a health care professional.

Cover and Protect the Wound

Covering the area with a sterile bandage or adhesive dressing protects it from dirt and bacteria. Change the bandage daily, or more often if it becomes wet or dirty.

Keeping the wound covered helps it heal faster by creating a moist environment, which promotes tissue growth and reduces scabbing.

For larger wounds or those in high-movement areas (like the hands or knees), non-stick gauze pads secured with medical tape may provide better coverage. If you notice any signs of infection — such as redness, warmth, swelling or pus — seek medical advice.

Monitor for Infection

Monitor the wound for signs of infection, which can occur even with proper care. Symptoms of an infected wound include increased redness around the area, warmth to the touch, a thick yellow or green discharge and worsening pain or swelling.

If you develop a fever or notice red streaks spreading from the wound, seek immediate medical attention, as these are signs of a serious

infection.

Let the Wound Breathe

While it's important to keep wounds covered in the initial stages, allow the wound to air out for short periods once healing is underway. This helps dry the wound and promotes the formation of new skin. However, don't leave the wound uncovered for too long, as this can expose it to bacteria and dirt, especially in the first few days.

When to See a Doctor

Some wounds require medical attention beyond at-home care. Seek medical help if the wound is deep, longer than half an inch, caused by a dirty or rusty object or if you haven't had a tetanus shot in the past five years. Also, if a wound is on the face or another sensitive area, it may need professional treatment to minimize scarring.

Start your day with healthy habits

BY GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

Start your day with healthy habits

Your mornings set the tone for the rest of your day.

By establishing a healthy morning routine, you can unlock a multitude of benefits, including increased productivity to enhanced well-being. Healthy morning rituals can incorporate exercise, hydration and mindfulness practices.

A healthy morning ritual is a powerful tool for enhancing your physical and mental well-being. Start your day with intention and watch as it positively affects every aspect of your life.

CNBC reported that research done by psychologists found that developing morning habits such as exercise and healthy eating can improve one's energy for the entire day. That same study found that there were other effects on the amount of energy a person had

— such as age, happiness levels and genetics — but that 60% of one's alertness depended on the environment and what a person chose to do upon waking.

Benefits

A well-structured morning routine can help you start the day with purpose and energy, enhancing your productivity throughout the day.

It can enhance physical and mental health. Incorporating exercise and hydration into your morning can kickstart your metabolism, improve cardiovascular health and promote overall physical well-being. Mindfulness practices like meditation and journaling can reduce stress, anxiety and depression, fostering better mental health.

Establishing a morning ritual creates consistency in your life, making it easier to manage your time and achieve your goals.



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Elements

Start your morning with physical activity, whether it's a brisk walk, yoga or a quick workout. Exercise releases endorphins, increasing your energy and improving your mood. After hours of sleep, your body needs hydration. Begin your day with a glass of water to kickstart your metabolism and replenish lost fluids.

Incorporate mindfulness

practices into your morning, such as meditation, deep breathing exercises or journaling. These activities promote mental clarity and reduce stress. Take a few minutes to set daily goals and intentions. This helps you establish priorities for your tasks and stay focused on what matters most.

Fuel your body with a nutritious breakfast. Opt for whole grains, fruits and

lean proteins to provide sustained energy throughout the day.

Putting it into Practice

If you're not accustomed to a morning routine, begin with small, manageable steps. Gradually add new practices as you become more comfortable. Let your ritual reflect your unique needs, personality and preferences. Choose those exercises, activities and food that resonate with you, that will let you welcome and enjoy your mornings.

Establish a consistent wake-up time to anchor your morning routine. Over time, it will become a habit. While consistency is important, allow flexibility for occasional variations due to travel or special occasions. Let your routines evolve with your changing needs and goals. Periodically review and adjust it to ensure it continues to serve you.

Personalized Nutrition

BY GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

The emergence of personalized nutrition has sparked a transformative shift.

The American Fitness Professionals and Associates cite this as one of the top wellness trends for 2024. This innovative approach recognizes that one size does not fit all when it comes to nutrition, and individuals have unique dietary needs based on factors such as genetics, lifestyle and health goals.

From DNA-based diet plans to digital nutrition platforms and personalized counseling services, the realm of personalized nutrition is reshaping how people nourish their bodies.

Types of Personalized Nutrition

A groundbreaking aspect

of personalized nutrition involves leveraging genetic information to tailor diet plans. DNA-based diet plans analyze an individual's genetic makeup to understand how their body responds to different nutrients. By identifying genetic variations related to metabolism, nutrient absorption and sensitivity to certain foods, these plans provide personalized recommendations for optimal dietary choices. Understanding one's genetic predispositions allows for a more targeted and effective approach to achieving health and fitness goals.

The digital age has ushered in a new era of personalized nutrition through digital platforms. Apps and online platforms now offer individuals the ability to track their dietary intake, monitor nutritional

goals, and receive personalized recommendations based on their unique profiles. These platforms often use artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms to analyze user data and provide real-time insights. Users can access customized meal plans, track their progress and receive dynamic adjustments to their nutritional guidance, creating a personalized and interactive experience.

Personalized nutrition goes beyond technology, with a growing demand for one-on-one nutrition counseling services. Registered dietitians and nutrition experts work closely with individuals to understand their specific needs, preferences and health objectives. Through in-depth consultations, these professionals create

personalized nutrition plans that consider factors such as medical history, dietary restrictions and lifestyle. Nutrition counseling services provide ongoing support, helping individuals make sustainable changes to their eating habits.

The Effect on Health and Wellness

Targeted health goals: Personalized nutrition allows individuals to set and achieve targeted health goals. Whether it's weight management, improved athletic performance or managing chronic conditions, personalized plans align with individual objectives.

Enhanced nutrient absorption: By tailoring diets to individual needs, personalized nutrition aims to enhance nutrient absorp-

tion. This is particularly significant for individuals with specific nutritional requirements or those with sensitivities to certain foods.

Long-term sustainability: Personalized nutrition plans prioritize long-term sustainability. By considering individual preferences and incorporating flexible dietary approaches, these plans are designed to be realistic and adaptable, promoting lasting lifestyle changes.

Prevention and management: The individualized nature of personalized nutrition is instrumental in preventing and managing various health conditions. From diabetes to cardiovascular issues, customized plans address specific dietary needs to support overall health.

3 tips to get a more restful night's sleep

BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

There is no magic formula to ensure long-term health. However, if there were such an equation, sleep would be a critical component. Though adults may be able to function with less sleep than doctors recommend, the National Institutes of Health note that consistent lack of sufficient sleep can interfere with work, social functioning and driving ability.

The National Institute on Aging notes that adults of all ages generally need the same amount of sleep, typically between seven and nine hours of rest per night. That's an important distinction, as busy adults in mid-life might feel as though they can operate on less sleep without adversely affecting their overall health. However, in addition to the problems noted by the NIH, the NIA reports that ongoing lack of sleep, or even consistently poor sleep quality, can increase risk for cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, and obesity.

Adults who feel their sleep quality is poor or those who aspire to sleep more each night can consider these three strategies to ensure a more restful night's sleep.

1. Keep devices out of the bedroom.

Screens are everywhere in modern life, and that includes the bedroom. In fact, the National Sleep Foundation's 2022 Sleep in America® Poll found that 58 percent of survey participants acknowledged looking at screens within an hour before bedtime. The NSF reports that device usage so close to bedtime can adversely affect sleep quality because the blue light emitted from screens has shorter

wavelengths than other colors in the visible light spectrum, which results in more alertness than warmer tones. The blue light actually confuses the brain into thinking it's earlier in the day, thus making it harder to fall asleep.

2. Skip late afternoon naps.

Short naps can help people reenergize, but the timing of naps could adversely affect how well people sleep at night. The Mayo Clinic notes that napping after 3 p.m. can make it harder to sleep soundly at night. And while short naps can provide a necessary jolt, it's important that naps be no longer than 30 minutes. Naps that exceed a half hour can contribute to feelings of grogginess and even compromise your ability to get restful sleep overnight.

3. Avoid alcohol.

Some may consider alcohol a sleep aide, and there's good reason for that perception, even if it's misguided. Hackensack Meridian Health notes that alcohol acts as a depressant for the central nervous system that can cause brain activity to slow down. As a result, alcohol can increase feelings of relaxation and tiredness. However, that effect is not long-lasting, and as alcohol levels in the blood drop, individuals are likely to wake up and may even find it hard to fall back asleep. Waking up in the middle of the night cuts down on the time individuals spend in the most restorative stage of sleep, which is why individuals often feel as if they got little rest after a night of drinking.

Sleep is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. Some simple strategies may help adults get a more restful night's sleep.



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