

[Intro music]

Zina Peters (Peters): Welcome to On the Couch With Kiwi a podcast series at FIU CAPS, I'm your host Zina Peters and I am pleased to introduce to you Dr. Kenley Sullivan-Thomas, University psychologist at CAPS.

Dr. Kenley Sullivan-Thomas (Dr. Sullivan-Thomas): Thank you for having me!

Peters: So tell us, what is sleep hygiene?

Dr. Sullivan-Thomas: Sleep hygiene consist of various habits and recommendations that people follow that contribute to really getting good quality sleep at night. Sleep hygiene recommendations tend to include things that can improve the quantity and quality of the sleep that you get. (And) The national sleep foundation has an extensive list of recommendations that people can look at.

Peters: That's great to know that resource too! Why is adequate sleep important?

Dr. Sullivan-Thomas: Adequate sleep is important for both our physical health and mental health, just our overall quality of life. Getting adequate sleep helps us function throughout the day, it can improve learning, it helps us pay attention, and it can help us better manage emotions as they arise. Things like chronic sleep deprivation can contribute to a variety of concerns including depression and anxiety, and (also) adequate sleep helps reduce the risk of some medical conditions.

Peters: So it sounds like it's very important to get adequate sleep.

Dr. Sullivan-Thomas: It is very important!

Peters: With that in mind, what is the recommended amount of sleep for an adult?

Dr. Sullivan-Thomas: The recommended amount of sleep varies on many different factors such as age and lifestyle factors. In general, for young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 the national sleep foundation recommends about 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night.

Peters: Are naps good idea?

Dr. Sullivan-Thomas: So it can be okay to nap periodically to get short-term boost if you're feeling tired. But, naps don't make up for missed nighttime sleep; if you are going to nap keep naps short, no more than 20 to 30 minutes. Avoid napping late in the afternoon or evening as this can make it really difficult to fall asleep at night.

Peters: With that in mind, can too much sleep cause too much problems?

Dr. Sullivan-Thomas: Definitely, chronic oversleeping can put someone at risk for a variety of medical concerns or it can be caused by an underlying medical condition. So if you notice you're constantly sleeping consistently longer than the recommended amount it would be a really good idea to visit the primary physician or sleep specialist. With that being said oversleep can be impacted by mental health concerns so in addition to oversleeping you're also experiencing oversleeping along with symptoms that are consistent with anxiety or depression. I would recommend seeing a mental health provider or come visit us at CAPS.

Peters: How does caffeine intake affect sleep?

Dr. Sullivan-Thomas: So if caffeine is had too close to bedtime, it can really be disruptive to sleep. A general issue is that it really makes it difficult to fall asleep but it also reduces the overall quality of sleep that we get, depending on the amount of caffeine had and the time of day. It's recommended to avoid use during the mid to late afternoon to reduce the potential impact on sleep.

Peters: With the demands of college, is good sleep hygiene even possible?

Dr. Sullivan-Thomas: So I think it is, the demands of college can definitely make it challenging to practice good sleep hygiene. But it's so important to make it a top priority given the impact that inadequate sleep has on physical and mental health as well as attention and learning, really respecting that sleep time and have an impact on your overall life. This may mean scheduling time to sleep, maybe planning your day around making sure that time isn't interrupted by needing to study or cramming last minute. So what we know about sleep is that we know that it's so important for academic success, we want people performing at their highest level every day.

Peters: So it sounds like sleep, making it a priority is just as important. What are some of the effects of not getting enough sleep?

Dr. Sullivan-Thomas: So not getting enough sleep can impact people in a variety of ways. People who don't get enough sleep may have difficulty maintaining attention or managing intense emotions when they arise. Chronic inadequate sleep has been linked to mental health conditions such as depression. And it's important to remember that good sleep quality just helps us to function effectively throughout the day, we tend to be less productive when we're sleep deficient. With regards to physical health, chronic inadequate sleep can lead to increased risk for certain medical conditions and obesity. If you have concerns for your overall health or sleep I would recommend contacting your primary care physician.

Peters: Thanks for that advice, I know you mentioned CAPS earlier. How can CAPS help students who have poor sleep hygiene?

Dr. Sullivan-Thomas: What a great question! So at CAPS we offer a variety of services an initial walk-in session can shed light on any mental health concerns that could be impacting sleep such as depression, stress, anxiety. Students can call CAPS to reserve a walk in appointment. It's also important to know that the Student Health Services also in the Student Health Center offer sleep hygiene services. As well as aromatherapy, acupuncture, and message services that can help you relax and fall asleep a little easier.

Peters: Can you leave us with some sleep hygiene tips?

Dr. Sullivan-Thomas: So definitely! So sleep hygiene tips include waking up at the same time everyday, even on the weekends when most of us want to sleep in. And don't go to bed at night until you feel tired enough to fall asleep. In you do get in bed and you find yourself tossing and turning, after about 30 minutes, get up and do a relaxing activity until you feel tired again and try to go back to sleep. If you take a nap, try to limit naps to less than 30 minutes to avoid napping late in the afternoon as I mentioned before. Also to reserve your bed for only sleep and sex. We don't want to associate our bed with too much time awake. With that being said, you would want to turn off all the electronics in your bedroom including not watching television while in your bedroom and not using your phone or computer while in bed. And a really important tip which I know is hard especially in dorm rooms with shared space is to keep your room quite, cool, and as dark as possible to create a really healthy sleep environment.

Peters: We learned so much from you today! I would like to take this time to thank you so much for joining us Dr. Sullivan-Thomas.

Dr. Sullivan-Thomas: Thank you for having me!

Peters: If you would like to learn more about CAPS visit us at caps.fiu.edu to listen to more podcasts and to learn more about our services. Thank you for joining us today!

[Outro music]