THE MPORTANCE of SLEEP IN ADDICTION RECOVERY

The importance of getting a good night’s sleep is something taught to us as children. And as we grow up, the concept of getting a proper night’s rest develops into a common sense thing which we just sort of *know* we’re supposed to do.

And it’s pretty easy to be reminded of why a good night’s sleep is so important. All one has to do is remember the last time they didn’t get a full night’s rest, and remember how they felt the next day — tired, grumpy, less productive, slower thinking, etc. A full night’s rest is essential for general health and wellbeing.

But *why* is sleep so important? And more specifically, why it is so crucial for people in recovery from drug or alcohol addiction to get a full night’s rest?

Why Sleep is So Important

Getting enough sleep is essential for maintaining optimal health and wellbeing, both physically and mentally. But what exactly does sleeping *do* to promote better health?

[*Medical News Today*](https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/325353.php#stronger-immune-system) answered that question with a list of the health benefits of a full, unassisted night’s rest. Some of the items mentioned in that article have been included here.

Sleeping is good for your brain in more ways than one. When we sleep, our brains go into a semi-dormant state, allowing us to recharge and prepare for the next day. That is why a good night’s rest improves concentration, productivity and cognition.

Sleeping helps improve caloric regulation. A good sleep schedule influences the hormones responsible for appetite. People who sleep well tend to process food better, which in turn makes it easier to keep to a healthy diet.

Sleep regulates blood pressure. The human heart is easily one of the organs most damaged by drug and alcohol misuse. That, in turn, affects blood pressure. When one sleeps long and well, blood pressure is regulated, adequately preparing the body for the coming day. A good sleep schedule helps lower the risk for heart disease and repairs the heart from the harmful influence of past drug use and drinking.

A good night’s rest improves mood. Sleep has been linked to people’s emotional and social state. Empathy is more prominent in one’s behavior and is more accessible when one gets a good night’s rest. One’s attitude and ability to socialize are also in a better state after a good night’s rest. All of these factors are critical to [life in recovery.](https://www.narconon.org/blog/drug-addiction/10-tips-starting-new-addiction/)

People who get enough rest each night are less likely to suffer from depression and other unpleasant moods. A [recovering addict](https://www.narconon.org/blog/drug-addiction/withdrawal-symptoms/) must take steps each day to improve his or her mood, and getting a good night’s rest each night is a big part of that.

The body *heals while* asleep. Damage to muscles, tissues, tendons, ligaments, even organs are repaired during sleep. The longer and healthier that sleep is, the more repair work is done.

Sleep is a healing process. We rarely think of it this way, but our time spent sleeping is not just a rest and recharge process. It’s also a *healing* process. Sleeping boosts the immune system, repairs the body, regenerates damaged areas, and helps the individual recover from illnesses, physical harm, and other maladies. For those in recovery, proper sleep is *essential* for these reasons and many others.

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There is plenty of evidence that suggests that people who struggle with a drug problem also tend to struggle with getting enough sleep. In fact, [according to one article](https://www.tuck.com/addiction-and-sleep/), “Sleep and addiction are intricately linked. Individuals with addiction are 5 to 10 times more likely to have comorbid sleep disorders.” [Comorbid means two conditions occurring at the same time.] Therefore, once an individual *does* break away from their drug of choice, they should make a regular commitment to getting enough sleep.

Sleep and Addiction Recovery

Being in recovery is a process of healing. And it’s not a short process. Days, months, and years spent using drugs and alcohol have a very harmful effect on the body. Even after one ceases drug use, that harmful effect can still manifest. It might not be as noticeable or as prominent, but the physical damage of drug use and heavy drinking is still there.

So good, *natural*, *unassisted* sleep is essential for those in recovery. When one sleeps, their body is quite literally going through a healing and recharge process. This process is crucial for all humans, but recovering addicts, in particular, can benefit significantly from this. A healthy, eight hours every night, unassisted by sleep aides, is precisely what the doctor ordered for someone in recovery.

There is even some evidence that suggests that recovering addicts who aren’t getting enough sleep are *more* at risk for relapse. Quoting a research paper published by the [U.S. National Library of Medicine](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2850945/), “Research has linked sleep disturbances to the risk of relapse among persons who are recovering from an alcohol addiction.” For the reason of merely *staying sober*, recovering addicts need to make sure they are getting long nights of healthy, natural, unassisted sleep.

If Your Loved One Still Needs Help…

Getting a good night’s rest should be a top priority for those in recovery. But for those who are still struggling with an alcohol or drug problem, the priority has to be on getting them help for the drug problem, first, *then* helping then get on a consistent, healthful sleep schedule. Good sleep is a part of the recovery process, but no amount of sleep can help an addict who is still using drugs and alcohol.

[Residential drug treatment](https://www.narconon.org/drug-rehab/) programs that offer long-term care are the types of programs that can help people break free from the addiction cycle. Such programs have the tools, facilities, and trained staff necessary to help people address and recover from their drug habits. If you know someone who is still struggling with drinking or drug use, make sure they get help today. Their future depends on it.