There are a ton of reasons why University of Maryland students aren’t getting enough sleep. Did you know that in 2009, 24% UMD students reported that sleep difficulties majorly affected their academic performance? (National College Health Assessment, 2009). Maybe it’s time to do some serious work on your sleep habits….I mean you do want more A’s right? Then get more Zzzz’s!

The Center for Health & Wellbeing (a satellite office of the University Health Center) can help you get more Zzzz’s. We are located in the ERC, room 0121 and all of our services are free!

8 Easy tips to get more Zzzz’s

1. Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep each night. Try to establish a consistent sleep schedule by going to bed around the same time each night and waking up around the same time each morning. Do your best to maintain this schedule even on the weekends...no matter how hard that may sound! One tip for falling asleep on time is to create your own relaxing bedtime routine. Instead of watching the tv or checking your friend’s Facebook status, try a relaxing activity to get your body & mind primed for sleep. For example, read a book for pleasure, take a bath, or practice deep breathing.

2. Check your sleep surroundings. Keep your room dark, quiet, and free from other distractions such as laptops, tv’s, and cell phones. The light from the LED screens can easily keep your mind alert. Have a noisy roommate/neighbor? Invest in a sound machine, white noise maker, or fan to drone out any outside noise. Your bed could also be the culprit for your lack of Zzzz’s: make sure it’s comfortable and cozy. Buy comfy sheets & pillows, add extra padding to your mattress by using a feather or cotton mattress pad. Bonus: Replace your pillows after 3 years - pillows can collect 10oz of dust mite remains...EWWW!

3. Pay off your sleep debt ASAP. We all want to believe that you can catch up on lost sleep over the weekends, but unfortunately this isn’t true. You can catch up on lost sleep if you do it within 24 hours. Stayed up late studying and only got 4 hours of sleep? Go to bed 1-2 hours earlier the next night and you’re body & mind will catch up on some of that sleep debt.

4. Napping is for babies! Although most college students love to fit in a daily nap, it’s really best to avoid napping altogether. Taking a nap during the day can easily throw you off of your sleep schedule. If you absolutely must nap (and by absolutely, I mean you fall asleep as soon as your head hits the pillow), only nap for about 30 minutes. If you nap for longer you may fall into a REM cycle. Once in a REM cycle, it is very difficult to wake up refreshed when your alarm goes off and you’re more likely to feel more tired and groggy than you did before you napped.
hungry could mean waking up several times throughout the night or not being able to even fall asleep. What food do you reach for? Candy bar? Bowl of ice cream? Fried chicken? First off, it’s not a bad idea to get something in your stomach. Going to bed hungry could mean waking up several times throughout the night or not being able to even fall asleep. However, you do need to be choosy about what you do eat before bed. Try to stay away from foods that are fried, sugary, spicy, heavy, and high in protein. Instead, go for healthy “lighter” options that incorporate a little bit of dairy, protein, and/or carbs.

Some examples of healthy bedtime snacks:
- Apple with peanut butter
- Low fat yogurt & granola
- Cereal & skim milk
- Cheese & fruit
- Crackers & cheese or peanut butter
- Oatmeal & glass of skim milk

5. Cap off the caffeine.
A pumpkin spiced latte sounds soooooo good right now! Hold up! Check the time….if it’s less than 6 hours before you want to go to bed maybe you should take a rain check on that latte. Caffeine and other stimulants (energy drinks, tea, etc) can stay in our system for up to 6 hours so it’s best to cut yourself off in the late afternoon/early evening to ensure a good night’s rest.

6. Use the bed for sleep & sex only!
Blushing yet? It’s true that these 2 activities are probably the only things you should do on a bed. Although many students enjoy the comfort of their bed for cram sessions, studying on your bed can have some negative effects. First, it can affect the quality of your study session. For example, as you lay down to read your Organic Chem book you decide to dip under the covers real quick…..prop up your head slightly with a pillow….rest your eyes for one sec…..Zzzzzzz… and you’re out cold. Secondly, it can affect the quality of your sleep. For example, if you start to think of nothing but Organic Chem each time you go to bed, you’re body and mind are probably pretty stressed out which doesn’t help you fall asleep or stay asleep.

7. Get sweaty! Just not right before bed
Getting in a good sweat session daily has great health benefits and can even improve your sleep. The trick is to not exercise intensely too close to bed time. During a good workout our bodies produce a stress hormone that can stay in our system for 4-6 hours. If you plan on having an intense workout (example: cardio kick boxing), try to finish at least 4 hours before bed. If you’re working out moderately (elliptical, walking, etc) 2-3 hours before bed is probably okay. Better yet, try to work out in the A.M….after a good night’s sleep of course.

8. Midnight munchies.
It’s 11:30pm and your stomach is growling. You want to go to bed by midnight, but you can’t seem to ignore the hunger pains. What food do you reach for? Candy bar? Bowl of ice cream? Fried chicken? First off, it’s not a bad idea to get something in your stomach. Going to bed hungry could mean waking up several times throughout the night or not being able to even fall asleep. However, you do need to be choosy about what you do eat before bed. Try to stay away from foods that are fried, sugary, spicy, heavy, and high in protein. Instead, go for healthy “lighter” options that incorporate a little bit of dairy, protein, and/or carbs.

Need more help with your sleep?
Stop by the Center for Health & Wellbeing M-F to talk to a health educator, pick up resources, or just relax in our relaxation zone!
ERC Room 0121 chwb@health.umd.edu
Visit us online: www.health.umd.edu/chwb