EAT MOVE SLEEP
The Pillars of Health

Nutrition, sleep, and exercise are the three pillars of a healthy life. Each of these lifestyle factors is important, but they are not independent of each other. They have a profound connection and can influence each other in meaningful ways. Understanding how nutrition, sleep, and exercise affect one another and building on their relationship holds a powerful key to improving both our physical and mental well-being.

Research is discovering that although all three pillars are essential, specific ones may play a more significant role in particular areas of our health. For instance, sleep quality may be a strong predictor of mental well-being. But let's focus on nutrition for a moment and better appreciate how sleep and exercise can influence and help us improve our eating habits, and how eating right can support our sleep and physical activity.

1 The right combination of fluids, carbohydrates, and protein, eaten at the right time, can improve athletic performance and decrease fatigue. Poor dietary choices, like eating right before a high-intensity cardio workout, can lead to increased nausea and make exercise more challenging.

2 Too many calories or too much fat in your diet may make it harder to get enough sleep, as do diets lacking key nutrients like calcium, magnesium, and vitamins A, C, D, and E.

3 High-intensity exercise decreases appetite, often for at least 30 to 60 minutes after a workout. Exercise can also help you feel more satisfied and full after a meal. Unfortunately, sedentary activities appear to have the opposite effect. Research shows that people who spend more time watching TV consume more calories.

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4 Without enough sleep, people tend to overeat and choose unhealthy foods. Sleep deprivation affects the body's release of ghrelin and leptin, two neurotransmitters that tell our brains when to consume calories. People who are sleep deprived are more drawn towards high-calorie foods.

5 Exercise can help us eat better! Research has found that after exercising for several weeks, people were more likely to choose foods like lean meats, fruits, and vegetables, and preferences for unhealthy options like fried foods and soda decreased.

6 Caffeine and sleep don't mix. The effects of caffeine can cause problems falling asleep as much as 10 to 12 hours later in some people! It's not always obvious where caffeine lurks, so be sure to check food labels.

7 It's best to avoid large meals close to bedtime. Being too full can interfere with falling asleep, and sleep quality can be disrupted as the body works to digest. If you must eat at night, a light snack like yogurt, banana, or a handful of nuts is a good choice.

8 If you're trying to exercise more or improve your eating habits, ensure that you are getting enough rest. It will help you maintain the other two behaviours. When you're rested, you're more likely to be physically active, eat at the right times of the day, and not let fatigue interfere with your motivation to stick to your diet.

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