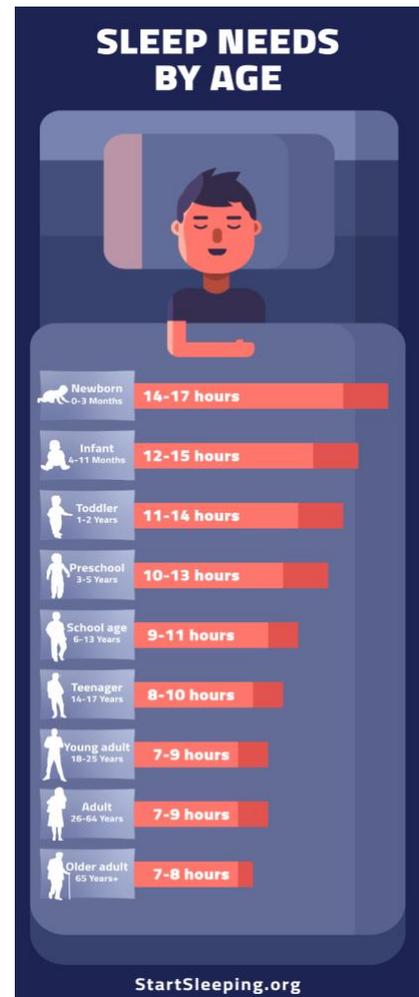## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST

How Much Sleep Do You Need?

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **Today we take a look at how much sleep is right for you to enhance brain health, optimize brain performance and decrease risk of brain illness.**

Getting enough sleep is essential for our brain and our overall health. A lack of sleep can contribute to risk factors, including obesity, heart disease, depression, impaired immune function, and decreased performance including an inability to concentrate. We all know how important it is to get enough sleep, yet we continue to wake up tired, long for a nap, and rely on caffeine to get us through the day.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a third of the people in this country are sleep deprived. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine and the Sleep Research Society recommends adults between the ages of 18 and 60 years get at least seven hours of sleep every night to promote optimal health and well-being.

Age, along with genetics, and lifestyle all play a role in determining how much sleep we need to be brain healthy. The National Sleep Foundation recently updated its guidelines for sleep based on age, with babies and small children needing the most sleep and the amount decreasing as we age.

If we are tired, it's hard to pay attention, so a lack of sleep can also impact our brain's ability to learn and remember. Sleep also helps us consolidate and store memories. According to Harvard Health, information we take in during the day is temporarily stored in the

SLEEP NEEDS BY AGE

Age	Sleep needed
Newborn 0-3 Months	14-17 hours
Infant 4-11 Months	12-15 hours
Toddler 1-2 Years	11-14 hours
Preschool 3-5 Years	10-13 hours
School age 6-13 Years	9-11 hours
Teenager 14-17 Years	8-10 hours
Young adult 18-25 Years	7-9 hours
Adult 26-64 Years	7-9 hours
Older adult 65 Years+	7-8 hours

StartSleeping.org

hippocampus, the part of our brain behind the eyes that acts as an inbox. The hippocampus has a limited storage capacity and it has difficulty storing new information until the inbox is cleaned out.

While we sleep, the connections between the neurons in our brains, or synapses, eliminate the memories we don't need and preserve the ones we want to keep and recall for years to come. If we don't get enough sleep, our brain doesn't have enough time to store those memories or make room for new ones.

When it comes to getting enough sleep, we can let our bodies be the guide. If we wake up tired, feel tired at work or school, long for a nap, or fall asleep on the couch, our body is telling us it's not getting enough sleep. And someone who is getting seven or eight hours of sleep a night, but is still feeling tired, may be suffering from interrupted sleep or a sleep disorder and may want to speak to a healthcare provider about undergoing a sleep study.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Getting enough good-quality sleep is essential to staying brain healthy. The BHI and [Harvard Health](#) recommend these simple steps to help you get a better night's sleep.

- **Create a sleep schedule.** Go to bed at the same time each night and wake up at the same time each morning — even on the weekend. Setting up a consistent bedtime routine and sticking to it will "train" your brain to fall asleep and wake up more easily.
- **Create a healthy sleep environment.** Use the bed only for sleep or sex and remove devices from the room to help reinforce the idea that this room is meant for sleeping. An ideal sleeping environment is quiet, dark, and relatively cool, with a comfortable bed and minimal clutter.
- **Reduce caffeine**. Just one cup of coffee in the morning can make it more difficult for many people to fall asleep and stay asleep. Caffeine can also increase your need to get up at night to use the bathroom.
- **Get moving.** Whether it's walking, running, or swimming, aerobic exercise provides three important sleep benefits: falling asleep faster, attaining a higher percentage of restorative deep sleep, and waking less often during the night.
- **Limit daytime naps.** Long naps can disrupt your natural sleep cycle and prevent you from feeling tired enough to fall asleep at bedtime.
- **Stop smoking and drink in moderation.** Nicotine makes it harder to fall asleep and alcohol depresses the nervous system. A nightcap may help some people fall asleep, but this effect disappears after a few hours and may even lead to waking up throughout the night. Alcohol can also worsen snoring and other sleep breathing problems.
- **Get up if you're not sleeping.** If you're unable to fall asleep after being in bed for 20 minutes, get up. Do something that helps you relax, like reading, until you feel tired.
- **Avoid sleep aids.** If you do take a prescription sleep medicine, work with your doctor to use it effectively and for as short a time as possible.
- And don't forget to *BE BRAIN HEALTHY* **and adopt a lifestyle** that includes

thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:
- o Stress resilience
- o Nutrition
- o Physical activity
- o Sleep
- o Social connection
- o Emotional wellbeing
- o Meaning and Purpose
- o Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- o Engaging with nature
- o General health
- o Positive impacts

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)
The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is a collaborative effort with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, to build brain healthy communities through education, collaboration, research, innovation, and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention, and optimization of performance.* The BHI is creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the *Be Brain Healthy* movement, *because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference.* **To view all Brain Health Boosts click here.**