A good night’s sleep is a potent tool for improving your health. It gives your body and your heart a much needed rest. As you sink into a deep sleep, your heart rate and blood pressure both decrease. While you’re sleeping, your body also creates cytokines, which help fight infection.

It’s really a myth you can get by on little sleep. Research suggests we need at least seven to eight hours each night to be alert and revitalized. Yet the National Institutes of Health (NIH) report that a third of adults feel daytime sleepiness that interferes with work, driving, and social interactions at least a few days every month.

Why are so many of us not getting adequate sleep?

In some cases, there may be an underlying sleep disorder (for example sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome), or symptoms from a specific condition can lead to disturbed sleep. For others, it’s simply not a high priority; in our “24/7” world, we tend to think of sleep as one of the things we cut back on to fit everything else in.

Whatever your situation, it’s important to understand why sleep is so critical. Read on for more information as well as practical tips for sleeping better.

Why Sleep Matters

Sleep deprivation may play a part in a number of health related issues, including weight gain.

Lack of sleep puts your body under stress and can increase the release of certain chemicals and hormones that negatively affect your health. Adrenalin, cortisol, and other stress hormones may rise during the day, leading to increased appetite, decreased fullness, and increased cravings for sugary, high-fat, and high-calorie foods. Sleep studies also link lack of sleep to increased body fat and decreased muscle mass.

High levels of adrenalin temporarily raise your breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure and can increase your risk of developing heart disease. Over time, raised cortisol levels can also contribute to the development of diabetes.

Mental health may also suffer. People who continuously suffer from lack of sleep have a higher risk of developing depression.

Sleep and Diabetes

Getting enough sleep is especially important for those with diabetes. Sleep deprivation increases the stress hormone cortisol, which raises levels of
glucose in the blood. This in turn can make controlling your diabetes harder.

A 2012 study in the Journal of Sleep Research found that if you have diabetes, it doesn’t necessarily mean your sleep will be affected. However, optimizing the quality and duration of sleep may improve blood sugar control. There are some symptoms that may affect your sleep if you do have diabetes:

- High blood sugars increase the number of times you have to get up overnight to use the bathroom.
- Higher blood sugars can also make you thirsty. You may have to get up for glasses of water in the night.
- Low blood sugar symptoms, such as dizziness, sweating, and shakiness can also affect your sleeping patterns.

If high or low blood sugars are causing you to have a disturbed sleep, see your doctor or diabetes educator to update your diabetes control plan.

How Other Conditions Affect Sleep

Having other conditions, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or congestive heart failure (CHF), can sometimes interrupt sleeping patterns. You may sleep better if you have more pillows or if you sleep in a recliner. Experiment to find what works for you.

If you have any condition or symptom that is interrupting your sleep, talk with your healthcare provider about what may allow you to get a good night’s sleep.

Flu 101

Did you know it takes about two weeks after vaccination for the antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against the flu? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), flu season can begin as early as October and last well into May. Flu activity usually peaks in January, February, or later. This is why it’s important to get your flu shot before winter hits.

While the CDC recommends everyone over six months of age have a seasonal flu vaccination, it’s especially important for people with COPD, asthma, cardiovascular disease, or diabetes. For more information, visit CDC.gov/flu. Flu benefit information is available at PacificSource.com/flu or by contacting our Customer Service team.

Pneumonia Vaccine Facts

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs that can cause mild to severe illness in people of all ages. Anyone can get pneumonia, but some people are at greater risk for this infection than others. Pneumococcal vaccines are very good at preventing severe infection and hospitalization.

The CDC recommends the pneumonia vaccination for:

- All adults 65 years or older
- People ages 2–64 with certain medical conditions, such as heart or lung disease
- Adults age 19 through 64 who smoke cigarettes

For more information, visit CDC.gov/pneumonia. Pneumonia benefit information is available by contacting our Customer Service team.
Member Corner: A Second Chance

"You always think it is going to happen to someone else, certainly not me!" stated John, a Condition Support participant who suffered a heart attack in July 2016. "I was lucky. I survived and have had a second chance to correct my previous health errors."

After the heart attack, John joined a cardiac rehab program and began working with a health coach through our Condition Support program. A year later, he's happy to report he's made great strides in improving his health condition.

With the support of his health coach, he has set achievable goals appropriate to what he wanted to focus on. "I really appreciate the calls from my coach. She has helped me stay focused and on track. And she's held me accountable," said John. "It is really like having a workout buddy!"

John's health coach was also there to answer questions and provide any extra information he might need. "The helpful information on diet, sleep, working out, and other concerns have helped me be successful at my recovery," he noted.

John has learned several ways to take better care of himself. Along with getting good cardiac workouts weekly, he now eats a Mediterranean diet, watches his salt and sugar intake, limits alcohol, and has quit smoking cigars.

He reports having a better awareness of what his body needs and what he needs to do to stay healthy. "It is all about creating a healthy attitude and lifestyle, and then practicing that every day."

Asked if he had any advice for those struggling with their health, John responded: "Do yourself a favor and step back from your life. I know this is very hard with life’s demands, but see what you can improve—take some time for yourself and take better care of yourself. You will not only feel better and have a better quality of life, but the loved ones who surround you will be very glad you did."

Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a common disorder in which you have one or more pauses in breathing or shallow breaths while you sleep. It is estimated that one in every 15 Americans suffer from sleep apnea, the most common form being obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). Some risk factors for OSA include excess weight, high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, smoking, and a family history of OSA. Sudden drops in blood oxygen levels that occur during OSA increase blood pressure and strain the cardiovascular system. Many people with OSA develop high blood pressure, which can increase the risk of heart disease. The more severe the obstructive sleep apnea, the greater the risk of coronary artery disease, heart attack, heart failure, and stroke.

If you have a chronic health condition, it is important to talk with your doctor about your risk factors, signs and symptoms, and concerns about sleep apnea. Together, you can make a plan for proper diagnosis and treatment. For more information about sleep apnea, visit one of these websites.

- mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/obstructive-sleep-apnea/home/ovc-20205684
- nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/sleepapnea

Signs You May Have Sleep Apnea

- Excessive daytime sleepiness
- Loud snoring
- Observed episodes of breathing cessation during sleep
- Awakening with a dry mouth or sore throat
- Morning headache
- Difficulty concentrating during the day
- Experiencing mood changes, such as depression or irritability
- High blood pressure
Spanish-Style Salmon with Garbanzo Beans and Spinach

This dish is healthy and delicious on its own or served with an additional green salad on the side.

Serves 2

Ingredients

- 8 oz. salmon
- 1 cup low-sodium, canned garbanzo beans
- 1/2 tsp. ground cumin
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
- 1 1/2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. paprika
- 1 pinch saffron (optional)
- 16 oz. fresh spinach
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 375° F.
2. Season the salmon with a pinch of salt and pepper.
3. Place skin-side down on a lightly greased baking dish.
4. Bake for about 15 minutes. If you are using frozen salmon, adjust cooking time to about 30 minutes. No need to flip the fish.
5. Drain and rinse beans. Place in a bowl, adding enough water to barely cover them. Add cumin and let infuse for a few minutes.
6. In a large frying pan, heat oil over medium to low heat. Add garlic and sauté 2–3 minutes, being careful not to burn. Remove garlic and add to the beans.
7. Add paprika and saffron (if using) to the bean mixture and stir.
8. Combine the beans with the spinach in frying pan and heat through. Keep warm while the salmon finishes baking.

Nutrition Facts: 320 calories, 42g protein, 8g fat (1.5g saturated fat), 30g carbohydrate, 11g fiber