WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SLEEP?

Many people view sleep as a time when the brain shuts off and the body rests. But research shows that several vital tasks are carried out during sleep that help us stay healthy and function at our best.

DURING SLEEP:

- Pathways are formed in the brain that are necessary for learning and creating memories and new insights
- Heart rate and blood pressure progressively slow as you enter deep sleep, and they rise and fall during REM sleep, which seems to promote cardiovascular health
- More cytokines are produced - these hormones help fight various infections, therefore boosting your immune system
- Human growth hormone is released which increases muscle mass and aids in the repair of cells and tissues
- The powerful regulators of appetite, energy use, and weight control are supported

CREATE A GOOD SLEEP ENVIRONMENT:

- Rethink your room's purpose; it is for romance and sleep only
- Declutter your bedroom
- Keep it cool (60-67° F)
- Invest in a quality mattress and comfortable bedding
- Use room darkening blinds/shades/curtains
- Filter outside noise - run a fan or use a white noise device
- Ban electronics - televisions, cell phones, computers, laptops, tablets, digital displays - any items that distract you from sleep
- Kick Fido and Fluffy out of the bedroom - pets disrupt sleep

TIPS FOR A MORE RESTFUL SLEEP:

It is estimated that nearly 75% of U.S. adults experience sleep disorder symptoms at least a few nights per week. If you are one of them, practicing good sleep habits may help!

- Stick to a Sleep Schedule: Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day to establish a healthy sleep pattern.
- Exercise Earlier: Exercise is great for you, but exercising too late in the evening can delay your sleep response. Try getting your activity in 2-3 hours before bedtime.
- Avoid Caffeine and Nicotine: Caffeine is a stimulant that can take up to eight hours to wear off. Nicotine is also a stimulant that can cause disrupted sleep caused by nicotine withdrawal.
- Limit Alcoholic Drinks Before Bed: A nightcap may help you relax, but heavy use impairs deep sleep and REM sleep stages.
- Limit Late Night Food and Beverage Intake: Large meals may cause indigestion that interferes with sleep. Too many fluids can cause you to awaken for frequent trips to the bathroom.
- Don't Nap After 3:00 pm: Late afternoon naps can make it more difficult to fall asleep at night. Get them in before 3 pm.
- Sun Exposure: Daylight is key to regulating sleep patterns. Get at least 30 minutes of natural sunlight a day, with exposure first thing in the morning, and turn down the lights before bedtime.
- Screen Time: The blue light emitted from electronic devices can interfere with melatonin production, which signals our body it is time for sleep. Be sure to power down one hour before bedtime.

The amount of sleep needed varies throughout the life cycle. How much do you need? Experts recommend for

- Newborns: 16-18 hours
- Preschoolers: 11-12 hours
- School-aged/Adolescent Children: at least 10 hours
- Adults: 7-9 hours

Fudgy Avocado Brownies

ingredients

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 medium ripe avocado, mashed
- ¼ cup extra-virgin coconut oil, melted
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- ½ cup pure maple syrup
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- ¾ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- ½ tsp. sea salt (or Himalayan salt)
- ¼ cup gluten-free flour
- ⅓ cup dark chocolate chips

instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Line an 8 x 8-inch baking pan with aluminum foil. Lightly coat with spray. Set aside.
3. Combine avocado, oil, egg, maple syrup, and extract in a medium bowl; mix well. Set aside.
4. Combine cocoa powder, salt, and flour in a medium bowl; mix well.
5. Add cocoa powder mixture to avocado mixture; mix well.
6. Add chocolate chips; mix until blended.
7. Pour batter into prepared pan; spread to make even.
8. Bake for 33 to 36 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.
9. Cool for an hour before removing from pan. Cut into sixteen squares

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