Health

Power Nap

The commercial world of today, stretching business hours to 24 hours a day, with 24-hour pharmacy, restaurants, casinos, supermarkets, etc., so people tend to stay up late, watch late night shows on television, surfing the web on the internet, etc. All these reduce people’s time to sleep. And some people even need more than 9 hours of sleep to feel refreshed and rested.

This study also showed (1) Sixty percent of adult stated they had driven a vehicle while drowsy from lack of sleep the past year; and 4 in 10 reported they had an accident or near accident because of tiredness or falling asleep at the wheel. (2) Seventy-five percent claims their partner has a sleep problem, snoring as the most common complaint. (3) Four out of ten of those surveyed reported lack of sleep adversely affected their sexual relationship, having lost interest in sex, having poorer performance or having sex less often. (4) Seventy percent claimed that their physician never asked them about their sleep. The recommendations of the National Sleep Foundation and experts in the field are abundance from any stimulant, coffee and alcohol before bedtime, and seek medical help if they think they have sleeping problem and/or snoring, or not getting enough rest at night.

Lack of sleep reduces the normal “recharging time of our body battery, our energy source” causing a chain of reactions in our physiology and body chemistry. This “lo-bat” condition leads to physical and mental stresses to our system. All these alter the normal homeostasis (internal balance) within us, weakening our immune system, and increasing our risk of developing metabolic diseases, hypertension (high blood pressure), stroke and heart attack, among others, or aggravating existing illnesses.

Here is where power naps come in; if you have the luxury and opportunity to enjoy one every day. Power napping is like “trickle-charging our battery.” A power nap is usually taken between 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, the primetime, lasting between 10 minutes and 30 minutes. Many countries of the world close up shops in the afternoon and reopen after 4:00 PM to enjoy that tradition and practice of having a power nap. However, a power nap longer than half an hour increases the risk of “sleep inertia,” which gives one the uncomfortable groggy sensation which lingers.

A power naps provides a healthy opportunity to reset the system and get a “power surge” and burst of alertness and physical strength, an amazing energy and memory boost, which even helps in decision-making and problem-solving. Naps reduce crankiness, increases cog-nitive skills, performance, and creativity, and leads to a more pleasant outlook for the remainder of the day. It also reduces accidents and mistakes, and lowers stress and even lowers the risk for cardiovascular diseases. I personally believe in the magic of power naps.

A NASA study among military pilots and astronauts revealed that “a 40-minute nap improved performance by 34% and alertness 100%.” A nap is superior to coffee or any “energy drink,” because caffeine decreases memory performance, contrary to what people think.

One must be consistent in their power nap routine, keeping a regular schedule and not napping for more than 30 minutes, best in a dark room and comfortable environment. Naps are most especially good and beneficial for young children and, actually, for all of us.

The popular historical figures who are “nappers” include, among others, Leonard DaVinci, Napoleon Bonaparte, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, John F. Kennedy, Winston Churchill, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, Salvador Dalí, Margaret Thatcher, John D. Rockefeller, and Yogi Berra.

Prevent a “lo-bat.” Trickle-chARGE your system daily. Take a power nap if you can. It does wonders!

The main objective of this column is to educate and inspire people live a healthier lifestyle to prevent illnesses and disabilities, and achieve a happier and more productive life. Any diagnosis, recommendation or treatment in our article are general medical information and not intended to be applicable or appropriate for anyone. This column is not a substitute for your physician, who knows your condition well and who is your best ally when it comes to your health.

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Climate Change: Dire Effects on Kidney Health

Temperatures are soaring across the Southwest, reaching a record-breaking 118 degrees in Phoenix and 120 degrees in Palm Springs. The heat wave has already proved deadly, killing 4 people along Arizona biking trails over the weekend.

Heat-related illness and death are certain the most immediate and dramatic threats from heat waves, killing more people than any other weather-related disaster. But now, as heat waves become more frequent and intense as a result of climate change, they are resulting in epidemics of a new type of kidney disease according to a recently published study in the Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrologists.

The study’s authors, from the University of Colorado, found that the steady rise in temperatures across the globe, and associated heat waves, is resulting in greater heat stress and dehydration among populations in rural, hot communities in Central America, Southeast Asia and parts of Africa. As a result, they are experiencing epidemics of chronic kidney disease, even without traditional risk factors for like diabetes or high blood pressure. They’ve termed the new disease heat stress nephropathy.

Individuals performing strenuous labor in hot conditions like farmersworkers appear to be bearing the brunt of the epidemic. The group’s risk is two-fold; in that agricultural work often involves heavy exertion outdoors, increasing the exposure to heat. At the same time, farmersworkers often lack access to basic occupational rights, like adequate rest, shade and water breaks, as well as living wages and health care access.

Among farmersworkers around the globe, the study noted that sugarcaneworkers appear to be the most at-risk, due to their heavy labor, long hours, lack of safe drinking water and additional heat exposure from burning cane for harvesting. This is especially concerning for the Philippines, which has a large sugar cane industry and is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change impacts.

Although heat stress nephropathy could be one of the first epidemics created by climate change, it is among a host of other heat-related health impacts that global warming is worsening. People with breathing and heart conditions are at higher risk for things like asthma attacks and heart attacks during a heat wave.

In fact, higher temperatures also make it harder for everyone to breathe, as heat worsens allergy seasons and combines with air pollution and ozone to increase smog. Heat also changes the effectiveness and side effects of life-sustaining medications. It negatively affects the nutrient value of some crops, causes death and disease in livestock, and causes other species like mosquitoes to grow, spreading diseases like Zika virus and Dengue fever.

Thankfully, there is a lot we can do to protect all people—especially vulnerable populations working outdoors—from the heat-related impacts of climate change. Most importantly, improving access to clean drinking water and cool places and ultimately reducing greenhouse gas emissions to slow global warming.

In California, this means improved water management, to ensure that rural farming communities are not tapping groundwater that is contaminated with industrial chemicals and fertilizers. It also means ensuring fair and just work hours and pay, and upholding existing rights to shade, water and adequate rest breaks for outdoor workers. Safe drinking water is not something to be taken for granted in our cities either, as shown by situations like that of Flint, MI where thousands were poisoned with lead contaminated water. Urban communities can also reduce the urban heat island effect by using cool building materials and planting more trees and shrubs for shade. These not only provide, protection against extreme heat, but reduce the reliance things like air conditioning, which require electricity and therefore contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

Finally, we need to slow the rate of global warming. By increasing the energy efficiency of our homes and workplaces, as well as voting for shifts towards renewable energy like solar and wind, we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prevent new climate change related epidemics.

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