**The Benefits of Napping**

We think it’s safe to say most people love an afternoon nap when they get the chance. However, there’s a range of benefits of napping that you may not have known about.

**1. Improve memory**

By triggering changes in the brain which strengthen the connections between brain cells, sleep is known to help cement events and new learnings in our memory. If you struggle to fit in enough hours at night, it may be wise to consider making a daily nap a part of your routine. When learning new theories or skills, our brains go through three distinct phases: acquisition, consolidation, and recall.

Acquisition is the phase where we learn the new skill. Clearly, this only happens during wakefulness. As does the third stage, which is where we recall it from our memories. But it’s the second stage, consolidation, which has to do with sleep. Research from Harvard shows that sleep has a huge impact on how we consolidate what we’ve learnt. And while different amounts of sleep are right for different types of recall, it’s safe to say that getting an extra sleep cycle in throughout the day is bound to help.

**2. Improve mental alertness**

Similar to improved memory, a major benefit of taking a nap is the improved mental alertness you are granted. By strengthening synapses and improving the function of your nervous system, incorporating power naps into your routine can help speed up your response time.

**3. Boost immune system**

[Research](http://jem.rupress.org/content/early/2019/02/11/jem.20181169) suggests that a better approach to sleep can improve the function of the T-Cells in your body. [T-Cells](https://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=11300) play a crucial role in the function of the immune system, searching out infections and breaking them down before they have time to grow.

**4. More energy**

Sleep is hugely important for keeping your hormones balanced. Without enough sleep, your body can’t regulate your blood sugar. This is because when the body lacks rest, the body finds it difficult to react to the hormone insulin – a key component for regulating for blood sugar. Other hormones that are impacted by sleep or the lack of are those which control growth and development, hunger, cell reparation, and plenty more. All these hormones play a role in how energetic you feel. So, the first step to better energy levels is always to improve your approach to sleep. And if you can’t quite get the recommended eight hours per night, it’s likely a daytime nap could help your body to cope better.

**5. Help with anxiety & depression**

Without enough sleep, our amygdala – the response centre of the brain – becomes overly responsive. In turn, we react to situations more intensely. This causes our blood pressure and heart rate to increase and can, in some instances, result in panic attacks or heightened anxiety.

**6. Improve stamina and performance**

If you’re a fan of keeping fit or playing regular sports, a benefit of napping is improved performance in the gym or on the field. When you sleep, your body is able to focus on repairing cells and resetting your body to its normal state. If you’re awake too long, the body has to focus on dealing with the day. For example, sleep is shown to play a key role in healing and repairing both your heart and blood vessels – crucial players in any sport!

**The disadvantages of napping**

There are occasions where a nap throughout the day might have a negative impact. This is most noticeable in those who suffer from insomnia and struggle to sleep at night. [Certain studies](http://content.onlinejacc.org/article.aspx?articleid=2510328) have shown that regular naps of over 60 minutes can increase the likelihood of cardiovascular diseases, metabolic syndrome, and diabetes. This makes it important to regulate your naps to ensure you’re getting the benefits and not doing yourself harm.

**The role of sleep cycles on napping**

Sleep cycles refer to the stages that your body and brain go through while you rest. Until the early 20th century, it was believed that sleep comprised of your body going into one state of rest until you awoke. However, by monitoring the brains activity, scientists discovered that your brain acts differently after amounts of sleep. This plays a huge role on deciding the length of your nap. We won’t go into detail on the different types of sleep cycles here, instead we’ll point out how different lengths of nap have different benefits on the body.